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The Truth Speaks

TUESDAY ▸ JANUARY 13, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 179 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

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ISRO's workhorse stumbles!

Anvesha satellite, 15 others lost in space

The PSLV-C62 rocket veered off course due to a critical third-stage malfunction; ISRO chairman Narayanan, confirming the anomaly, said deviations noted in the stage-3.

SRIHARIKOTA (AP)

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) suffered a major setback on Monday after its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C62) encountered a "critical anomaly" during the rocket's third stage, leaving the status of all 16 satellites on board uncertain.

The 44.4-metre-tall PSLV lifted off at 10.18 am from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, carrying an Earth observation satellite - EOS-N1 (Anvesha) - and 15 co-passenger satellites from India and overseas. The mission was intended to place them into a 512-kilometre Sun-Synchronous Orbit after a 17-minute flight.

ISRO's live broadcast showed the rocket performing normally through its first and second stages, and the third stage ignited as planned. But soon after that announcement, officials noticed that something was wrong.

Disturbance during third stage: ISRO chief

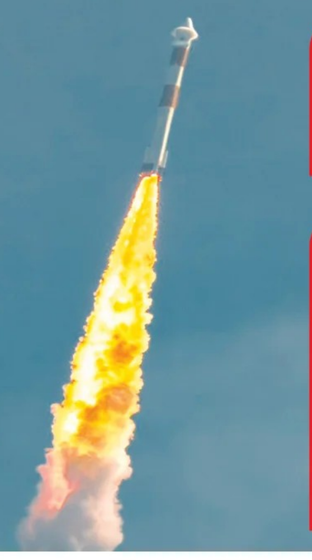
ISRO chairman V Narayanan said disturbances in the rocket and later deviation from flight path was observed when strap-on motors were providing thrust during the flight's third stage to propel the vehicle to the intended altitude.

"The PSLV is a four-stage vehicle with two solid stages and two liquid stages. The performance of the vehicle up to the end of the third stage was expected. Close to the end of the third stage we are seeing more disturbance in the vehicle and subsequently, there was a deviation observed in the flight path," he said at the Mission Control Centre.

About 30 minutes after lift-off, ISRO confirmed on X that the mission had "encountered an anomaly" during the end of the PS3 (third-stage) burn and that a detailed analysis was under way.

What happened to 16 satellites?

- PSLV has completed 63 flights so far, including the ambitious handrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), and Aditya-L1 mission.
- All the payloads, which included eight satellites from foreign countries, were lost.
- This is the first time in its over three-decade old history that the PSLV rocket has failed twice in a row.



- The PSLV rocket, which uses two solid-fuel stages and two liquid-fuel stages, has been one of the most reliable vehicles of the space agency,
- The main payload of the PSLV-C62 mission was an earth observation satellite called Theos-2 developed jointly by Thailand and the United Kingdom (UK). There were 14 other co-passenger satellites, including a technology demonstration by Nepal and India and a re-entry capsule developed by a Spanish startup.

ISRO has not yet confirmed whether EOS-N1 and the 15 other satellites were successfully deployed. Telemetry and tracking data from ground stations are still being analysed to determine what happened to the spacecraft after the rocket went off course, according to ISRO. "Today, we attempted the PSLV-C62/EOS-N1 mission… the mission could not proceed in the expected flight path. That is the information right now available," Narayanan said.

He added that ISRO would share more details once data from all tracking stations had been studied.

Repeat worrisome

A similar, previous attempt in May 2025 (PSLV-C61-EOS-09) also did not succeed due to "motor pressure issue," and there was a fall in the chamber pressure of the motor case.

The anomaly is particularly troubling as a similar, previous attempt in May 2025 (PSLV-C61-EOS-09) also ran into problems in the third stage due to "motor pressure issue," and there was a fall in the chamber pressure of the motor case.

India-German trade ties on a high

AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, on the latter's first official visit to India, reviewed the fast-expanding partnership as both countries prepare to mark 25 years of strategic cooperation and 75 years of diplomatic relations.

The visit, resulted in the exchange of 19 MoUs and eight key announcements across defence, technology, and clean energy. Prime Minister Modi and Chancellor Merz reiterated their support for the conclusion of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement as a key outcome of the upcoming EU-India Summit. The German Chancellor indicated that the European Union and India may conclude a free trade agreement by the end of this month.

Focus on economic and people-to-people exchange

A key takeaway for Indian travellers was Germany's announcement of visa-free transit for Indian passport holders, a move expected to ease international travel via German airports. Another notable announcement was the opening of a German Honorary Consulate in Ahmedabad, aimed at supporting growing business, education and cultural exchanges in Gujarat.

Economic and technology cooperation featured prominently. Leaders welcomed plans to set up a German–Indian CEOs' Forum, partnerships in semiconductors, telecommunications and critical minerals, and extended the tenure of the Indo-German Science and Technology Centre.

Youth loses Rs 1.5 lakh to 'AI woman' on dating app

BENGALURU

A youth fell prey to a AI-generated woman's charm and lost over Rs 1.5 lakh.

The youth had created a profile on a dating app called 'Happn' and received a friend request from a woman named Ishani. They shared their mobile numbers and chatted about personal matters.

A few days ago, he received a video call from Ishani, who was naked during the call. She asked him to undress, and he obliged. The scammers recorded the video and later blackmailed him, sending him nude photos and demanding money. They extracted Rs 1.53 lakh from him in installments.

When they asked for more money, the youth filed a complaint with the police. Preliminary investigation reveals the involvement of an AI-generated woman. The police have registered a case and launched a hunt for the accused.

Trump may visit India next year; trade talks to resume on Jan 13, says Gor

India most essential to Washington: US Ambassador

NEW DELHI

No country is as essential as India for Washington and both sides are actively engaged in firming up a trade deal, US ambassador-designate Sergio Gor said on Monday.

"India is the world's largest nation. So it's not an easy task to get this across the finish line, but we are determined to get there," he said at a ceremony attended by US embassy employees in the national capital. He said Washington and New Delhi are set to resume the next round of trade deal negotiations from Tuesday.

Gor, who also serves as the US Embassy's Special Envoy for South and Central Asian Affairs, further said Donald Trump may visit India by next year.

The US envoy, who took charge in November last year, said his appointment aims to take the partnership between the two countries to the next level.

"In the months and years ahead, my goal as ambassador is to pursue a very ambitious agenda. We will do this as true strategic partners, each bringing strength, respect and leadership to the table," he added.

'Trump-Modi friendship 'very real'

"Real friends can disagree, but always resolve their differences in the end," Sergio Gor said at the US Embassy here while referring to the friendship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump. "The United States and India are bound, not just by shared interests but by a relationship anchored at the highest levels. Real friends can disagree but always resolve their differences in the end," he added.

Karur stampede: CBI grills TVK's Vijay

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday began a detailed line of questioning of actor-turned-politician Joseph Vijay as part of its probe into the Karur stampede case, focusing on alleged delays, crowd management lapses, and organisational responsibilities related to the event.

The CBI took over the investigation from the Tamil Nadu Police in October last year following a Supreme Court order. Since then, the agency has been examining the circumstances surrounding the stampede at a political event in Karur.

One of the key issues under scrutiny was the alleged seven-hour delay at the venue.

Merz signals EU-India trade deal by Jan end

AHMEDABAD

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Monday signalled the possibility that the European Union and India could sign a landmark free trade agreement by the end of January, a move that could reshape global trade ties as protectionism rises and US-India talks remain stalled. Top EU leaders would travel to India to seal the deal if negotiations wrap up in time, Merz told reporters after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad on Monday. "In any case, they will take another major step forward to ensure that this free trade agreement comes into being," he said.

Modi, Merz call for free Indo-Pacific

New Delhi Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on Monday condemned the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack and the November 10 Delhi blast, calling for concerted international efforts to combat terrorism in a "comprehensive and sustained manner" as per the international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter. n a joint statement, the two leaders also called for a "free and open" Indo-Pacific, while announcing a new bilateral Indo-Pacific consultation mechanism. New Delhi has also welcomed Berlin's continued and growing engagement in the region.

CM, DCM will be called to Delhi for talks: Kharge

BENGALURU

AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar would be called to New Delhi for discussions whenever necessary, amid a "power tussle" within the ruling Congress.

Kharge said, "Whenever necessary, the party would call them," in response to a question from reporters on when the CM and Deputy CM would be summoned to Delhi for talks.

The leadership tussle within the ruling party has intensified amid speculation about a possible change of chief minister after the Congress government completed the halfway mark of its five-year term on 20 November.

The speculation has been fuelled by the reported "power-sharing" arrangement between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar at the time of the government's formation in 2023.

Siddaramaiah, who recently became the longest-serving chief minister of the state, surpassing the record held by Devaraj Urs, has expressed confidence that he will complete the full five-year term. However, he has maintained that the final decision rests with the Congress high command.

QUICK READ

Mithila mourns death of Darbhanga's last Maharani

PATNA

A wave of grief has swept across the entire Mithila region of Bihar following the death of Maharani Kamasundari Devi, the third wife and last erstwhile Maharani of Maharaja Kameshwar Singh of Darbhanga. The 'Queen' had been unwell for the past six months and breathed her last at the Maharaja's Kalyani residence in Darbhanga. Maharaja Kameshwar Singh married Kamasundari Devi in 1940. He was the last ruler of Darbhanga and died in 1962. After the Maharaja's death, Maharani Kamasundari Devi, who was born in 1930, established the Kalyani Foundation in his memory. Numerous dignitaries, including members of the royal family, are expressing their condolences on her passing.

Kite string slits man's throat in Indore

INDORE

A 45-year-old man died after a razor-sharp kite string slit his throat while he was riding his bike in Madhya Pradesh's Indore on Monday. According to the Tilak Nagar Station House Officer (SHO) Manish Lodha, the deceased has been identified as Raghuveer Dhakar. "We recieved information that a bike rider has died after his throat was slit by a kite string. We immediately came to the hospital upon receiving this information.

Ex-VP Dhankhar admitted to AIIMS

NEW DELHI

Former vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on Monday after he fell unconscious twice on January 10, officials said. Dhankhar, 74, underwent an MRI, the officials said, adding that other tests will be carried out on Tuesday. The former vice president had "two bouts of unconsciousness" in the washroom around 3.30 am on January 10, they said.

DON'T DARE TO ATTACK

Iranian leader threatens Trump with 'unforgettable lesson'

TEHRAN

Iran's parliament speaker on Monday warned US President Donald Trump of an "unforgettable lesson" in case Tehran is attacked after Washington's repeated threats of military intervention amid the anti-government protests in the country.

Addressing a huge rally of pro-government protesters at Tehran Square, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf claimed the Islamic Republic is fighting a "war against terrorists."

Iran is fighting a "four-front war," he said, listing economic war, psychological war, "military war" with the United States and Israel and "today a war against terrorists."

"The great Iranian nation has never allowed the enemy to achieve its goals," he said, flanked by the slogans "Death to Israel, Death to America" in Persian, and vowing the Iranian military would teach US President Donald Trump "an unforgettable lesson" in case of a new attack.

Iran witnessed mass counter-protests where thousands of Iranians filled a major square in central Tehran on Monday to support the Islamic Republic and mourn the security forces killed during the protests, state television pictures showed.

Iran witnessed mass counter-protests where thousands of Iranians filled a major square in central Tehran on Monday to support the Islamic Republic and mourn the security forces killed during the protests, state television pictures showed.

People brandishing the Islamic Republic's flag packed the capital's Enghelab (Revolution) Square as prayers were read for victims of what the government has termed "riots."

Similar rallies were also underway in other cities after a call by President Masoud Pezeshkian, according to the images.

QUICK READ

Wife kicks husband, calls him Ganja peddler

Bengaluru

In a shocking incident, a couple fell off their bike at Balekundri Circle. The police reached the spot and brought the two to the Cubbon Park traffic police station. However, the woman refused to enter the police station and started behaving rudely on the road. The woman got into a fight with her husband and kicked him with his leg and shouted in public, This is a ganja peddler. The incident caught the attention of the public present. The traffic police have registered a case of drink and drive against the couple and seized their bike. The couple has been asked to pay the fine in court.

We are sorry for our mistake, private company apologizes

Bengaluru

A private company that angered Kannadigas by issuing an advertisement saying it needed non-Kannadiga HR for work has now apologized. A company called Skill Sonics had published an advertisement on Naukari.com that it wanted a non-Kannadigas for HR jobs. This had angered Kannadigas. Kannada organizations were ready to protest against the JP Nagar-based company. This advertisement was widely condemned on social media. This was a mistake by the Kolkata division. After the opposition from Kannadigas, we have cancelled this recruitment advertisement. We apologize for the inadvertent incident and have apologized to the Kannadigas with folded hands.

Elephant squad seen at Anekal border

Bengaluru

Wild elephants have roamed around Vanakanahalli and Kalanayakanahalli in Anekal on the outskirts of Bengaluru. Wild elephants have moved from the forest to the country in search of food. Elephants have been attacking and destroying farmers' crops at night. Farmers are worried about the menace of wild elephants. Forest officials visited the spot and inspected it. They tried to chase the herd of wild elephants towards the Bannerghatta forest. However, elephants were seen firing rounds in the fields of farmers.

Mandur legacy waste clean-up drive enters phase 2

The project would significantly reduce environmental risks such as groundwater contamination, methane emissions, and dump fires

BENGALURU

Residents living around Mandur, east Bengaluru, long affected by a sprawling garbage dump and its environmental risks, may finally see relief with civic authorities launching phase 2 of biomining work to scientifically clear decades of legacy waste. Mandur, one of the city's oldest dump sites, holds an estimated 22 lakh tonnes of accumulated waste. The clean-up is being carried out in phases, using scientific processing and segregation to maximise material recovery rather than mere removal. Phase 2 covers over 10 lakh tonnes of legacy waste, of which more than 9 lakh tonnes have already been processed. Screening machines segregate the waste into multiple fractions, reducing the volume that ultimately requires disposal. Bio-earth forms the largest share of recovered material, with over 3.9 lakh tonnes, about 62 percent of the processed waste generated as stabilised organic matter. Of this, 40,592 tonnes have been supplied to farmers for use as a soil conditioner, officials said. Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) accounts for 76,899 tonnes (12 percent), with 30,167 tonnes already transported to the waste-to-energy plant operated by Karnataka Power Corporation Limited for power generation.

The remaining fractions include over 1.1 lakh tonnes of inert material (18 percent), 32,041 tonnes of recyclables (5 percent) and 19,225 tonnes of construction and demolition waste (3%), all of which are being routed through authorised recycling and disposal channels.

Kari Gowda, CEO of Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited, said the focus was on converting old dumps into usable resource streams. Through scientific biomining and segregation, we are recovering and reusing maximum material. Bio-earth is going to farmers, RDF is used for energy, and only a small fraction remains inert, he said, calling phase 2 a key milestone in accelerating the clean-up, he said.

12 percent of 34K notified muzrai temples missing: Survey

BENGALURU

Some 4,170, 12 percent of 34,566 notified temples across 237 taluks in Karnataka are missing, according to a state-wide survey undertaken by the muzrai department to verify the physical existence of these shrines. District-wise data shows Belagavi accounts for the highest number of missing or unidentified temples at 1,788, followed by Gadag at 515, Raichur 275, Udupi 235, Yadgir 172 and Chamarajanagar 142.The exercise was prompted by a survey conducted six years ago which highlighted the absence of comprehensive and reliable data on temples under the muzrai department. However, muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy attributed this mismatch to reclassification of district boundaries.

> **This is mainly due to reclassification of district boundaries, taking their number from 20 to 31. Discrepancies in survey numbers are being identified and rectified. Around 20,000 properties have been identified, while the remaining cases are pending.**
>
> —Ramalinga Reddy, Muzrai Minister

The survey findings have emerged in the backdrop of efforts to streamline honorarium money payments to temple priests. Sources said introduction of Aadhaar-enabled payments blew the lid off multiple irregularities. In several cases, more than one priest was found to be drawing payments for a single temple, while in others, the same priest had claimed tasdik money for multiple temples.

It was during this verification of beneficiaries we began to notice that several temples mentioned in records were not traceable at all, said the official. The survey began in 2020 and is still going on. To verify the existence of temples and their associated landholdings, officials are cross-checking records against gazette notifications issued under the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowment Act, 1997. In cases where temples are found to be missing, village accountants and revenue inspectors are required to submit detailed reports, certified by the tahsildars, to the Muzrai Commissioner. These reports form the basis for further administrative action. Where temple land is found to have been encroached upon, the department attempts to restore it following a multi-step process. This includes verification by the tahsildar, preparation of a mahazar, and eviction by the competent authority. The department is committed to restoring temple properties wherever encroachments are established, said Rajender Kataria, Vice-Chairman of the Dharmik Parishad. Officials said the ongoing survey is expected to help clean up records, prevent leakages in payments, and protect temple assets across the state.

In case of encroachments, we follow the due process of the law: Conduct surveys, issue notices, initiate eviction proceedings. If encroachments are established, appropriate action is taken to restore such properties, said Rajender Kataria, Vice-Chairman of the Dharmik Parishad.

Liquor licences see marginal rise

BENGALURU

The state saw an increase in excise licences in 2025, with 14,101 renewed or granted, up from 13,433 in 2024. Retail vending CL-2 licences continued to dominate in terms of overall numbers, with the highest concentration in Bengaluru North, South, and Rural divisions, followed by Mysuru, Belagavi, Kalaburagi, and Hubballi-Dharwad.

The hike in numbers, according to officials, was due to an increase in licence requests, especially from lodges and clubs. As per excise department data, CL-7 licences issued to boarding and lodging establishments formed the largest share of new licences issued in recent years. The overall number in the category for 2025 stood at 3,472, up from 2,945 in 2024."We gave 300 to 400 new licences in the CL-7 category, which are hotels and boarding houses, due to an increase in demand. Much of the demand came from in and around Bengaluru areas, mostly from establishments located on highways. At airports, only one new licence was issued under separate categories such as CL-16, CL-17 or CL-18, which cover duty-free outlets and airport bars. Club licences (CL-4) issued rose from 297 in 2024 to 331 in 2025, with the increase largely being because of around 30 new licences. Overall, the increase was moderate and mainly driven by CL-7 licences, Venkatesh Kumar, Commissioner of Excise, said.

Retail Vendor Beer (RVB) licences in 2024 totalled 904 across the state. In 2025, the number of RVB licences stood at 979 due to an increase in demand. The demand for RVB licences is increasing mainly because more consumers are opting for keg or draught beer. Regular breweries supply the same branded beer in kegs with less pasteurisation, which gives it a fresher taste, and this is supplied directly to bars and restaurants holding RVB licences. In addition, microbreweries have popularised the culture of freshly brewed beer, which indirectly increased the demand for keg beer as well.

Nearly 1,000 existing licence-holders already took RVB licences, and new licences are being issued as well, contributing to the overall increase in excise licence numbers year on year, the Excise Commissioner explained.

Accused Pavithra Gowda to get weekly home food

BENGALURU

The court has allowed Pavithra Gowda, who is in jail in the Renukaswamy murder case in Chitradurga, to be given weekly meals.

The court, which heard the case of providing home meals to accused Pavithra Gowda on Monday, has ordered that she be provided with home meals once a week. It has also been stated that if there is any change in her health, she should be given meals as per the doctor's advice. Earlier, accused Pavithra Gowda, Nagaraju and Lakshman had filed an application with the court demanding that they be given home-cooked meals, as they were not getting good food in the jail, which was causing them to become ill. Therefore, they had filed an application with the court demanding that they be given home-cooked meals. The court, which accepted the application, had allowed the three to be given home-cooked meals once a day.

Another fare hike likely for Namma Metro in Feb

BENGALURU

Barely a year after the last revision, Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) is preparing to revise Namma Metro fares again in February, following recommendations of the Fare Fixation Committee.

Metro commuters are likely to face another fare hike in February, with BMRCL planning a fresh revision of Namma Metro ticket prices, barely a year after the last increase.

According to sources, the proposed fare revision is being worked out as one year has been completed since the previous hike, which was implemented in February last year. As per existing rules, BMRCL can revise fares periodically by submitting a proposal under the provisions of the Metro Rail Act.

The move is in line with the recommendations of the Fare Fixation Committee (FFC), which had suggested that Metro fares be revised every year, with a maximum increase capped at 5 per cent annually. Based on this guideline, BMRCL is now calculating the extent of the possible hike for February.

However, the exact percentage of the fare increase for this year is yet to be finalised, raising concerns among daily commuters who already feel the financial pinch.

It may be recalled that BMRCL had drawn sharp criticism in 2025 after implementing a steep 71 % fare hike, which triggered widespread public backlash and commuter protests. That hike had put the Metro authority under intense scrutiny, with many passengers terming it unaffordable.

Despite the criticism, officials indicate that the fare revision process is being taken forward as per norms, and a formal proposal is expected to be submitted shortly. If approved, this would mark yet another increase in Namma Metro fares, adding to the burden on Bengaluru's lakhs of daily Metro users, many of whom depend on the service as their primary mode of transport.

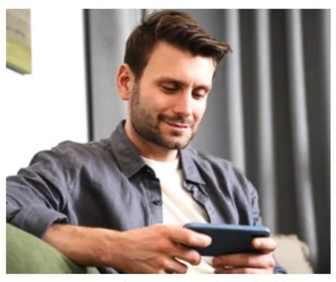
With February approaching, commuters are now anxiously waiting to see how much the fares will rise this time and whether BMRCL will limit the increase within the recommended ceiling.

Study finds stress fuels harmful porn use

BENGALURU

A 26-year-old married male who approached NIMHANS' SHUT clinic had reported distress and perceived loss of control due to his pornography use. The IT professional had started consuming pornography from a very young age (12-14 years) as a stress buster and even though his usage was regular, it remained non-problematic. However, in the last year, the use got more frequent, affecting his relationships and occupation.

Manoj Kumar Sharma, Professor and Head of the SHUT Clinic, shared, in the detailed exploration, we were able to identify various stressors from the workplace/family, poor coping styles, beliefs/values towards pornography use, and his secrecy of porn use habits with his partner, which led him to the conclusion of addiction to porn use, rather than his actual use of pornography. Lately, following a couple of structured sessions using a cognitive-behavioural approach, he was able to regain some control over his pornography use and now, plans to engage in an open communication with his partner about it, said Sharma. The professional was one of the case studies for a research, titled "Indian adults' problematic pornography use: Psychological correlates and predictors, which was published in the Geopsychiatry Journal.



It was authored by M Rajashekar, PhD scholar at the department of clinical psychology, Manoj Kumar Sharma, and Senthil Amudhan, Professor and head of department of epidemiology, all from NIMHANS. The study found that Indian adults experiencing higher levels of psychological distress such as anxiety, stress, depression, and pornography craving were more likely to engage in Problematic Pornography Use (PPU). PPU refers to the excessive and compulsive consumption of pornographic material despite experiencing significant distress, negative consequences, or a sense of moral incongruence. The study surveyed 112 Indian adults aged 18 and above who reported difficulties with PPU, using an online cross-sectional design conducted between March and June 2024. Among the participants, 81 percent were male, with a median age of 25. About half of the respondents were students, while 48 percent held undergraduate degrees.

Ramamurthy Nagar techie case confirmed as a murder

BENGALURU

The Ramamurthy Nagar techie death case has been confirmed as murder. Police arrested neighbour Karnal Kurai, who killed Sharmila after she resisted his one-sided advances and tried to destroy evidence by setting fire to the flat.

What was first believed to be a mysterious death due to fire has now been confirmed as a cold-blooded murder, with police arresting the victim's neighbour after cracking the case using mobile phone evidence. Sharmila, originally from Mangaluru, had been living for the past two years in Subramanya Layout under the Ramamurthy Nagar police limits. She worked as a techie at a private company in the city and stayed in a rented double-bedroom flat along with her friend Shabareen. However, Shabareen had travelled to Delhi for work about 15 days before the incident, leaving Sharmila alone in the apartment. On the night of January 3, Sharmila returned home as usual and locked both the iron gate and the main door of her flat.

GBA ELECTIONS

Supreme Court sets June 30 deadline for GBA elections

BENGALURU

The Supreme Court has issued a firm directive to the Karnataka government to complete the entire election process for the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) by June 30, making it clear that no further extension of time will be granted under any circumstances.

The order was passed by a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant, which described the matter as long-pending and stressed the need for elected civic governance in Bengaluru. The court instructed the state government to publish the final ward-wise reservation list by February 20, setting the pace for the remaining stages of the election process.

Appearing for the Karnataka government, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi informed the court that the reservation process would be completed within a month. Taking note of this assurance, the bench issued formal directions and warned that delays would not be entertained going forward.

In parallel, the Election Commission submitted a detailed roadmap. It said the final voter list will be published by March 16, 2026, and polling is planned by the end of May 2026. The Commission also clarified that school and college buildings would be made available as polling stations once examinations conclude. With most exams ending after May 26, the Commission assured the court that elections would be conducted immediately thereafter.

Recently, the Greater Bengaluru Authority released the draft ward-wise reservation list for all 369 wards under the new five-corporation administrative structure. The Karnataka government has issued the official notification covering Bengaluru South, North, East, West and Central corporations, formally triggering the election process.

QUICK READ

New bus service connects villages to Yellamma

Kundgol

A new bus service has been arranged from Lakshmeshwara to Sri Kshetra Savadatti Yellamma's Gudda via Kundgol, covering Ramgiri Pashupatiha, Shiru, Kundagoda, Nakatti Nagarahalli, Mantur, Bandhiwada, Kusugalbyahatti, and Tirlapur road. The service aims to help devotees visiting Yellamma's hill, farmers transporting crops, traders reaching Lakshmeshwara market, and students attending local schools and colleges. Farmers, women, and students from several villages submitted a petition to Managing Director M. Priyang in Hubli requesting this service. Officials assured them that proper action would be taken. The initiative is expected to improve travel convenience and support the region's daily activities significantly.

Karnataka leaders honor saint's life and legacy

Gadag

The birth anniversary of Shri Shivayogi Siddarameshwara will be observed on Wednesday, January 14, at 11 am at the Auditorium Hall of the District Administration Building. Following government instructions, the celebration will be simple and symbolic, featuring a wreath-laying ceremony. Community leaders and district-level officials are expected to attend the program, said the Assistant Director of the Kannada and Culture Department. The event aims to honor the life and contributions of Shri Shivayogi Siddarameshwara while keeping the ceremony modest. Citizens and officials are encouraged to participate and pay tribute to the revered saint.

VB-G Ramji Scheme Gains Popularity Nationwide

She highlighted UPA created 1,660 crore man-days, Modi government 3,010 crore, with funds rising and 153 lakh projects completed

HUBBALLI

The Central Government's new employment initiative, VB-G Ramji, has been hailed as effective and widely popular, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje said on Monday. Addressing a press conference in Hubballi, she said the Congress and Indi Alliance are opposing the VB-G Ramji Act across the country despite its approval and state-level rollout.

Shobha Karandlaje explained that the scheme is an updated version of the National Employment Guarantee Program, aimed at providing work to rural unemployed citizens. "Since 2005, this program has been running to help rural workers. From 2005 to 2025, over Rs 10.66 lakh crore has been spent under this initiative," she said.

Comparing past and present governments, she noted that during the UPA period, 1,660 crore man-days of work were created, whereas under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, this number rose to 3,010 crore man-days. Financial allocation also increased from Rs 2,13,220 crore to Rs 8,53,810 crore, resulting in 153 lakh different projects completed across the country.

She admitted that earlier, mismanagement and fake job cards were reported in some states. "Over 10.50 lakh cases were registered for misuse of funds, which made reviewing the scheme necessary," she said. The updated VB-G Ramji program now offers 120 working days annually, with gram panchayats empowered to decide suitable projects.

The minister emphasized that decentralization and rural development are central goals. "We aim to boost the rural economy, improve water resources, and increase food stock availability. Poverty has decreased from over 25 crore people below the line to just 4.86 percent today," she added.

Karandlaje criticized the opposition for targeting only the name change rather than the substance of the program. "Many Congress MPs support the initiative, but some oppose it solely for political reasons. This scheme was developed after a year of consultation with experts," she said, challenging Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar for an open discussion on the topic.

Haveri officials act against illegal beef markets

HAVERI

Haveri Deputy Commissioner intervened to regulate meat markets, improve residents' living conditions, and coordinate with Guthuru Taluk officials to monitor, close, or relocate unlicensed operations effectively

Residents of Hulaguru village in Savanoor Taluk have raised concerns over the growing number of unauthorized beef markets, prompting action from the Haveri district administration. Locals reported that more than ten unlicensed shops have opened, causing bad odors and deteriorating air quality in the area.

Villagers claimed that daily slaughtering at these markets has created health and environmental issues, while authorities and local representatives had not responded to their repeated complaints. The presence of some Panchayat members allegedly allowed these markets to expand without oversight, intensifying public frustration.

Haveri Deputy Commissioner has now intervened to address the problem, emphasizing the need to regulate meat markets and improve living conditions for residents. Officials are coordinating with the Guthuru Taluk administration to monitor and control the situation, ensuring that unlicensed operations are closed or relocated.

Authorities warned that failure to act could provoke protests from the local community, reflecting growing tensions over public health and hygiene concerns. The administration aims to restore normalcy while maintaining the balance between legitimate trade and environmental safety.

Residents hope that swift enforcement and regular inspections will reduce the impact of these markets on daily life and prevent further expansion of unregulated operations. Officials also plan awareness campaigns to educate the public and shop owners about legal compliance and proper sanitation.

Navanagar police, led by Inspector Gowli, registered a case against Sunil Nidhi, confirming Meghav, Bhagavan, and another's involvement in the murder and cover-up

Hubballi Contractor Murder Case: Three Held

HUBBALLI

A shocking murder in Navanagar has left Hubballi residents stunned. Vitthal Rathod, a local contractor, was killed following a violent confrontation linked to a personal dispute. Police have arrested three individuals in connection with the case, which reportedly involved attempts to disguise the crime.

The incident occurred near the workers' shed close to the Law University building. According to police, a quarrel broke out between Vimala Satna's husband Meghav and son Bhagavan. When Vitthal tried to intervene, the argument escalated, and Bhagavan struck Vitthal on the head with a wooden stick, causing fatal injuries on the spot.

Following the attack, the accused allegedly attempted to make the death appear accidental by taking Vitthal's body to SDM Hospital, claiming he had collapsed and died. Authorities later uncovered the truth after a detailed investigation.

Navanagar police, led by Inspector Jayamth Gowli, registered a case against Sunil Nidhi, Vitthal's son, while thoroughly probing the events. The investigation confirmed the involvement of Meghav, Bhagavan, and another accused in the murder and the cover-up attempt.

The three arrested are currently facing legal proceedings as police continue gathering evidence. Officials emphasized that justice will be served and warned against attempts to manipulate facts in criminal cases. The case has brought renewed attention to personal disputes escalating into violence in the city.

Dharwad leader demands action against DC

DHARWAD

Rai Ta Sena Karnataka state president V. Resha Sobarada Math has raised strong concerns over the performance of Dharwad District Magistrate Divya Prabhu. He alleged that the DC is not responding to public issues, especially the problems faced by farmers, and spends little time in the district.

Speaking to the media in Dharwad, Sobarada Math said, "The District Magistrate seems more focused on administrative work than solving real problems of the people. Farmers and the poor are being ignored." He added that local officials often face difficulties because they do not get guidance from the higher authorities on issues related to health, education, and drinking water.

He confirmed that a formal letter has been sent to the Chief Minister and the Speaker requesting the immediate transfer of Divya Prabhu. "If the government does not take action soon, we will approach the High Court with a writ petition," he warned.

Sobarada Math emphasized that the criticism is not personal. "We are concerned about the efficiency of the district administration and the welfare of people, especially farmers. Local officers cannot work properly without support from the top," he said.

He also mentioned that despite repeated requests, district officials have not visited rural areas to understand the problems of villagers. The delay in guidance and action has caused difficulties in managing basic services for citizens.

The leader said he had personally met Chief Minister Shalini Rajneesh and urged that urgent action should be taken. He called for a more accountable and active administration to ensure public problems are resolved without delay.

Farmers demand chickpea center, road repairs soon

KUNDGOL

Farmers in Kundgol staged a protest on Monday at the Tahsildar office, urging authorities to establish a chickpea procurement center and repair roads leading to rice fields. The demonstration was organized by Karnataka Rajya Rai Sangh and the Green Army, highlighting growing concerns over crop sales and infrastructure.

During the protest, farmers submitted a petition to Raju Mavarkar, calling for immediate action. Taluk Farmers' Association President Gurupa Thapa Banda said repeated requests to start maize and sorghum procurement centers had been ignored. "Without proper purchasing centers, brokers are freely buying crops, and farmers are facing financial difficulties," he said.

Thapa Banda noted that Gadag district has active procurement centers and urged the government to establish similar facilities in Dharwad district. He emphasized that chickpea procurement in Kundgol taluk must begin before the harvest to ensure fair prices for farmers.

The protest drew several local leaders and representatives, including V.S. Kam Teppagoud, Basavaraja Dodnaykar, Chandrakurubara, Devappa Ichchangi, Ramanagouda Paravatagoud, Shamkaragouda Dodmani, Renu Kahuyilgoula, Shankarasuthara, and Devakapattar.

Farmers hope the government will respond quickly, improving both crop procurement systems and rural road conditions.

These measures aim to protect farmers' incomes and support agricultural growth in the region. The petition signals ongoing pressure on local authorities to act on long-standing demands for better farming infrastructure.

Preparations underway for 77th Republic Day celebrations

KOPPAL

Preparations for the 77th Republic Day celebrations in Koppal are underway, with officials instructed to make elaborate arrangements to ensure a meaningful event, District Collector Dr. Suresh B. Itnal said on Monday. He presided over a preparatory meeting at the District Collector's Office Hall, emphasizing coordination and thorough planning by all committees responsible for the celebrations.

The Republic Day program on January 26 will begin with flag hoisting at 8 a.m. at the District Administration Building. The District In-charge Minister will later hoist the national flag at the Koppal District Stadium at 9 a.m. Officers from various departments are expected to attend, and the event should be conducted in a neat and orderly manner.

Dr. Itnal instructed officers to organize cultural programs and a parade featuring teams from the police, forest department, and scouts and guides at the district stadium. The Koppal Municipal Corporation has been tasked with maintaining cleanliness, ensuring a drinking water supply, and decorating important city areas with lights. KSRTC will arrange transportation for school and college students to attend the stadium program safely.

Tahsildars were directed to invite elected representatives and dignitaries according to protocol. Fire officials will deploy personnel and engines as a precautionary measure. DDPI and DDPU will coordinate the safe transport of students, and national flags must be hoisted at all government offices, schools, and colleges on the day. Special homage will be paid to Sangolli Rayanna, commemorating his martyrdom with a portrait worship ceremony.

The meeting was attended by several officials, including Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary T. Krishnamurthy, Additional Superintendent of Police Hemanth Kumar, District Health and Family Welfare Officer Dr. Lingaraju T., District Training Center Principal Krishnamurthy Desai, Social Welfare Deputy Director Ajjappa Sogalada, Pre-University Education Deputy Director Jagadish, DDPI Somashekar Gowda Patil, KIMS Tobacco Control Cell Coordinator, and representatives from the Forest and Excise Departments.

Authorities emphasized the importance of teamwork, strict adherence to protocol, and a disciplined, well-organized celebration reflecting national pride.

Misusing social media can lead to jail, warns DySP

ATHANI

Deputy Superintendent of Police Prashant Munno has issued a stern warning about the misuse of social media, emphasizing that offenders could face jail time. Speaking at a social media awareness program at Kagawa Police Station on Monday, DySP Munno highlighted the risks of false information and offensive content online. "Social media is a great platform for sharing information, but it comes with responsibilities," he said. "Posting false news, tweeting insulting remarks, or sharing obscene content is not just unethical—it is a serious crime."

He explained that using someone's picture or video without consent, spreading misinformation against the government, or forwarding misleading content can lead to legal action. "Even sharing videos made by others without verification can be considered an offense under the law," DySP Munno added.

The awareness program aimed to educate citizens about the legal consequences of online actions. Officials stressed that authorities are closely monitoring social media platforms to prevent misuse and protect public order.

Participants were urged to think before posting or sharing content and to verify information from reliable sources. The police department intends to continue such programs to promote responsible social media use and ensure that the digital space is safe for everyone. DySP Munno concluded with a strong message: misuse of social media will not be tolerated, and strict action will be taken against violators.

CITIZEN-FRIENDLY POLICING

Belagavi SP urges respect, strict action on crime

BELAGAVI

After taking charge, Belagavi Superintendent of Police K. Ramarajan visited Athani Police Station and gave clear instructions to treat the public with respect. He emphasised that people visiting the station should be seated promptly and their concerns heard patiently. No police officer, from constables to senior officials, should shout at or use abusive language toward the public.

SP Ramarajan said arrests should be made only when legally necessary and investigations must maintain high standards. "It is not the department's job to scold or threaten anyone," he added. Citizens can lodge complaints if they face any misbehaviour, and if action is not taken at the station, they can escalate the issue to higher authorities.

The SP also addressed growing road accidents in Athani, noting 68 deaths in the past year. Strict legal action, equivalent to murder charges, will be taken against drunk drivers causing fatalities. He warned that minors must not drive.

To curb substance abuse, all stations will now have modern cannabis test kits for immediate detection. Illegal liquor sales in villages will be targeted promptly if the public provides information.

SP Ramarajan also highlighted action against gambling, including Matka operations, and cybercrime. He stressed that people should be careful of online fraud schemes promising quick money, especially in the stock market, and encouraged logical thinking before investing.

The SP's visit signalled a renewed focus on public service, road safety, and cracking down on illegal activities while ensuring fair treatment for citizens.

QUICK READ

Open University begins admissions for all courses

Gadag

The Karnataka State Open University, Mysore, has opened admissions for the 2025-26 January session. Students can enroll in undergraduate programs like B.A., B.Com., B.Sc., B.B.A., B.C.A., B.Lib., and B.S.W., as well as postgraduate courses including M.A., M.Com., M.B.A., M.Sc., M.C.A., M.Lib., M.S.W., and Journalism, plus diploma and certificate programs. Interested candidates can apply online at the KSOU Admission Portal or visit the Gadag Regional Center in person. Fees can be paid online. For more details, students can contact the center at listed phone numbers or visit the official website.

Class 6 admissions open in minority schools

Koppal

Applications are now open for Class 6 admissions in Morarji Desai and Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Residential Schools for Minorities in Koppal district. Students currently in Class 5 can apply. Seventy-five percent of seats are reserved for minority students, while 25 percent are for other categories. Annual family income limits apply for all categories. Applications can be submitted online via Seva Sindhu or in person at the schools and information centers by February 10, free of cost. Required documents include caste and income certificates, residence proof, Aadhaar, and photos. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Dalit community threatens militant agitation soon

The petition demanded Dalit land allocation, improved crematoriums, anti-untouchability action, timely education, land titles, and better village roads

SHIRAHATTI

The Taluk Committee of the Karnataka Dalit Sanghsha Samiti has warned of militant agitation if their demands are not addressed promptly. On Monday, the committee submitted a petition to Tahsildar K. Raghavendra Rao highlighting pressing issues faced by the Dalit community in Shirahatti.

Taluk coordinator Ravi Gudimani and community head Muthu Ba Vimani expressed strong dissatisfaction over the neglect of basic amenities in most villages. They emphasized that officials have not acted decisively to resolve these long-standing concerns.

The petition outlined several key demands. The Dalit community requested allocation of land for the Hoss crematorium and improvement of existing crematoriums. They called for strict action against the continued practice of untouchability in certain villages. Additionally, they urged measures to ensure timely education for Dalit students and the issuance of land titles for plots allotted to Dalits. Roads connecting Dalit colonies in all villages were also demanded to be developed without delay.

The committee requested that officials conduct a thorough review of grants provided under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCP and TSP) schemes and submit a detailed report. "A permanent solution should be found for all the problems highlighted in our appeal," Gudimani said. He warned that failure to act would trigger a violent protest in the coming days.

The Tahsildar responded by calling a meeting of the concerned departmental officials, urging them to find effective solutions to the issues raised.

The petition submission was supported by several community leaders, including District Organization Women's Coordinator Anjana Devi Mageri, M.K. Lama, Prakash Badannavar, Chandra Pothraj, Hanu Manthappa Baddeppanavar, Ashok Badavara, Ramesh Gudimani, Shivana Gowda, Patil Yallappa Godannavar, Paramesh Gudimani, Subhash Mulgunda, and Mariyappa Ha.

The protest threat highlights ongoing frustrations in the Shirahatti taluk over inadequate infrastructure, delayed land allotments, and social inequality. Authorities are now under pressure to act swiftly to prevent escalation.

DC conducts surprise hospital inspection

KOPPAL

The Deputy Commissioner asked about psychiatry services and drug addiction counseling, urging medical officers to promote awareness, prevention, and support programs to help patients overcome substance abuse

Koppal District Hospital received an unexpected visit on Monday from Deputy Commissioner Dr. Suresh B. Itnal, who personally inspected the hospital's facilities and monitored the attendance of doctors and staff. The surprise visit aimed to ensure smooth functioning and improved patient services.

Dr. Itnal emphasized the importance of maintaining cleanliness throughout the hospital. He also addressed the issue of long queues at service counters, urging officials to open additional counters and deploy more staff to serve patients efficiently. "People should not face trouble while obtaining cards," he noted.

The Deputy Commissioner inquired about specialized services in the psychiatry department and the counseling programs available for drug addicts. He called on medical officers to raise awareness about addiction prevention and support programs, stressing the need to help patients overcome substance abuse.

During his tour, Dr. Itnal inspected several hospital departments, interacting with staff and reviewing their work processes. Hospital doctors and staff were present throughout the visit, receiving guidance and instructions to improve patient care and hospital management.

The surprise inspection highlights the administration's commitment to better healthcare services in Koppal and reflects ongoing efforts to address both general and specialized patient needs efficiently while maintaining high standards of hygiene and public service.

Free fashion designing training for youth

KOPPAL

Karnataka Entrepreneurship Development Centre (CIDAC), Koppal, has invited applications for a 30-day free skill-based training on Fashion Designing and Tailoring. The program is open to Yuva Nidhi and women beneficiaries from any taluk in the district. Participants will learn self-employment skills, entrepreneurship, business planning, government schemes, banking, loan applications, account management, and project preparation. Experienced instructors will guide trainees, and successful participants will receive certificates. Eligible candidates may also be recommended for government loan facilities. Women aged 18–40 with at least SSLC qualification can apply by January 17 in person at CIDAC, Koppal, or via phone registration.

Yatnal said political power displays are natural, challenging Shivakumar to show strength in North Karnataka against Siddaramaiah

Yatnal challenges leaders to show their power

VIJAYAPURA

Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal sparked political debate on Monday by challenging top leaders to demonstrate their influence in the region. Speaking to reporters, he said that when Chief Minister Siddaramaiah visited his constituency, he paid him respect as a protocol gesture. "Siddaramaiah is not just the Congress CM; he is the Chief Minister of the state. I welcomed him respectfully. If some people are hurt by this, I cannot do anything," Yatnal added.

He drew a parallel with the Congress's approach to the Prime Minister, saying, "Just as I respected Siddaramaiah, the Congress will also pay respect to the Prime Minister."

On the subject of political power, Yatnal stated that displaying strength is a natural part of politics. "A power show is inevitable in today's political scenario.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has the ability to show his power. If Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar also has power, let him demonstrate it. Let's see if he can show his strength in North Karnataka," Yatnal challenged.

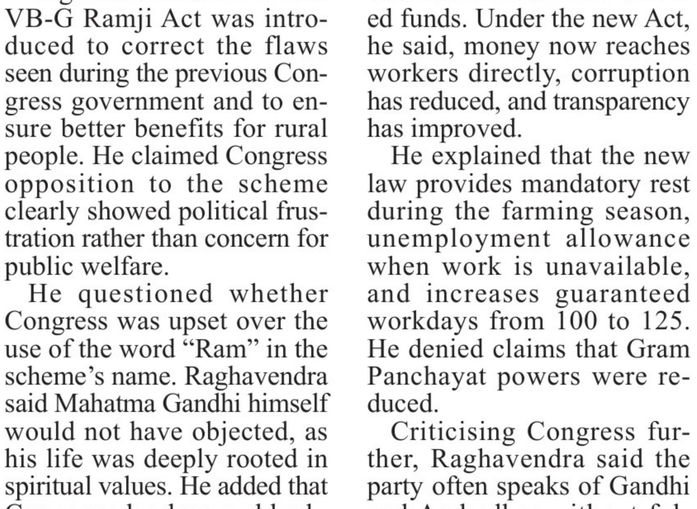
The MLA also referred to a previous encounter with D.K. Shivakumar, claiming that Shivakumar had insulted him during a visit by calling him a saint.

Addressing BJP matters, Yatnal spoke about the delayed election of the Rajya Sabha president. "The BJP high command knows everything. They decide who gets what. The leadership will make all final decisions," he said.

He thanked the public for their support, noting that people shouting his name in front of the Chief Minister was a reminder of his popularity. "This admiration from the people is a wake-up call for both Congress and BJP. I sincerely thank everyone for their love and trust," Yatnal said.

The MLA's remarks underline the ongoing tussle for political influence in North Karnataka as parties gear up for local and state-level contests.

Raghavendra defends VB-G Ramji scheme strongly



SHIVAMOGGA

BJP MP B.Y. Raghavendra on Monday said the Central government's VB-G Ramji scheme is a strong step toward building a developed India and accused the Congress party of giving it unnecessary political colour. He was speaking at a press conference held at the district BJP office in Shivamogga.

Raghavendra said the new VB-G Ramji Act was introduced to correct the flaws seen during the previous Congress government and to ensure better benefits for rural people. He claimed Congress opposition to the scheme clearly showed political frustration rather than concern for public welfare.

He questioned whether Congress was upset over the use of the word "Ram" in the scheme's name. Raghavendra said Mahatma Gandhi himself would not have objected, as his life was deeply rooted in spiritual values. He added that Congress leaders suddenly showing concern for Gandhi was ironic.

The MP pointed out that the employment guarantee scheme introduced in 2006 did not carry Gandhi's name initially and was renamed later for political gain. He alleged that during Congress rule, several schemes were named after Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi, while Gandhi was ignored.

Raghavendra claimed the earlier employment scheme became a centre of corruption, where machines replaced labour and middlemen diverted funds. Under the new Act, he said, money now reaches workers directly, corruption has reduced, and transparency has improved.

He explained that the new law provides mandatory rest during the farming season, unemployment allowance when work is unavailable, and increases guaranteed workdays from 100 to 125. He denied claims that Gram Panchayat powers were reduced.

Criticising Congress further, Raghavendra said the party often speaks of Gandhi and Ambedkar without following their ideals. He urged Congress leaders to support good laws and work together for national development.

Swami Vivekananda Jayanti inspires youth nationwide

GADAG

Gadag witnessed a grand celebration of Swami Vivekananda Jayanti on Monday at the main hall of the District Administration Building. The event was organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Youth Empowerment and Sports Department, and the Federation of Youth Associations. Legislative Council MLA S.V. Sankanur inaugurated the program, calling Swami Vivekananda a great thinker whose short life left an extraordinary impact. He emphasized that Vivekananda's teachings continue to guide and inspire young people, shaping their thoughts and actions positively.

"Swami Vivekananda taught that serving society is equivalent to serving God. Through his ideas on global unity, human values, and social service, he earned worldwide respect while upholding India's culture and heritage," said Sankanur. He added that the youth are the hope of the nation and should carry forward Vivekananda's message of discipline, self-confidence, and strong character.

Param Pujya Shri Swami Shivapriyanandaji Maharaj, President of Ramakrishna Vivekananda Seva Pratishthan, described Vivekananda as a supreme ascetic and symbol of inner strength. He urged people to reject negativity and laziness, cultivate spiritual power, and act with honesty, selflessness, and kindness for the country's progress.

His Holiness Sriswamy Sumedanandaji Maharaj of Ramakrishna Geetashram, Hospet, performed a song composed by G.S. Shivarudrappa in honor of Vivekananda, along with a patriotic song. District Commissioner C.N. Sridhar highlighted Vivekananda's call to perform duties without expecting rewards and to remain proud of Indian culture.

The event was attended by dignitaries including Gadag Betageri Urban Development Authority President Akbarsabha Babarji, Additional District Commissioner Dr. Duragesh K.R., and officials from multiple departments. College students also participated enthusiastically. Venkatesh Alkode led the national anthem, while Dr. Sharanu Gogeri welcomed the guests. Prof. Bahubali Jain hosted the program and concluded with a vote of thanks. The celebration left attendees motivated, reflecting on the timeless wisdom of Swami Vivekananda.

Joshi accused of blocking Kasapa corruption probe

SHIVAMOGGA

Kannada Sahitya Parishad district president D. Manjunath on Monday accused Parishad president Nadoja Mahesh Joshi of trying to derail an ongoing economic irregularities investigation in Kasapa. He said the probe was ordered after protests by members and is being carried out under court directions.

Speaking at a press conference, Manjunath alleged that Joshi acted in a dictatorial manner by changing Kasapa rules at will while allowing corruption and nepotism. He said key executive committee provisions were altered in the name of reforms and the matter is now before the court.

Manjunath claimed he was insulted and threatened during executive committee meetings for questioning mismanagement. He alleged Joshi warned him of suspension from life membership and tried to silence him by creating pressure through the media. He said he had to attend meetings under police security. He further alleged that members were misled by placing the Articles of Association amendment before a retired High Court judge, while several suggestions were rejected. He demanded that the truth behind the alleged distortion of provisions be made public.

Citing the auditors' report, Manjunath said serious financial irregularities had surfaced. He claimed the president drew Rs 22.6 lakh as annual salary, spent Rs 19 lakh on unit heads, and committed irregularities running into crores through works and purchases.

He said the government appointed administrators after nationwide protests, but Joshi approached the High Court seeking a stay. The investigation, he added, is continuing as per court orders, and he will appear before the court on January 13.

Manjunath alleged harassment of long-serving employees, illegal appointments of election workers, and misuse of public funds.

MENTAL WELLBEING DRIVE

Officials visit hostels to boost student growth

GADAG

Officials of the Social Welfare Department launched a special hostel outreach programme at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Government Pre-Matric Hostel in Gadag, aiming to support students' academic progress and mental well-being. The programme was organised jointly by the Social Welfare Department and other supporting departments.

During the interaction, officers spoke directly with students and shared guidance on studies, discipline, and emotional health. Special focus was placed on motivating SSLC students ahead of their annual examinations. Officials reassured students, helping reduce exam-related stress and encouraging confidence and focus.

Participants offered several suggestions to improve the overall learning environment in hostels. They expressed hope that similar programmes would be extended to all hostels in the next phase, ensuring equal attention to students across the district. The initiative was described as a strong step toward the all-round development of hostel students, combining education, motivation, and care. As part of the programme, officials also shared lunch with the students, creating a friendly and open atmosphere. Organisers said such interactions help build trust and inspire students to aim for better results and long-term success in life.

The department announced that similar initiatives titled "Walk of Officers Towards Hostel Accommodation" will be conducted in all hostels in the coming days with support from various departments.

Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department, Smt. Dr. Nanda Hanabaratti, appreciated the efforts of the hostel staff and organisers. Assistant Director Gopal Lamani and Hostel Supervisor Ajaresabh Haralihalli, who coordinated the programme, were congratulated for their commitment.

Officials present included T.P. Executive Officer Mallaiah C. Koravanavar, field education officers, staff of Dwarakamahi Foundation, office superintendent Manjula N, dormitory supervisors from different hostels, and other department staff.

QUICK READ

Shivayogi Sri Siddarameshwar Jayanti Celebration on Jan 14

CHITRADURGA

The district administration, District Panchayat, Department of Kannada and Culture, and the City Municipality will jointly host the "Shivayogi Sri Siddarameshwar Jayanti" on January 14 at 11 a.m. in the District Collector's office auditorium. Bhovi Gurupitha's Immedi Siddarameshwar Swamiji will grace the occasion with his divine presence. The inauguration will be performed by Minister for Planning and Statistics and District Incharge Minister D. Sudhakar, while MLA K.C. Veerendra Pappi will preside.

Distinguished guests include MP Govind M. Karajol, Hosadurga MLA, B.G. Govindappa, Chalakkere MLA, T. Raghumurthy, Molkalmuru MLA N.Y. Gopalakrishna, Holalkere MLA M. Chandrappa, and Legislative Council members Chidananda M. Gowda, K.S. Naveen, D.T. Srinivas.

CM Inaugurates Projects worth ₹906 Crore in Yadrami Taluk

CM Siddaramaiah inaugurates ₹906 crore projects in Yadrami, pledges equality in Kalyana Karnataka, counters BJP's political allegations

KALABURAGI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah expressed confidence that within ten years, inequality in Kalyana Karnataka will be eliminated, ushering in balanced development. Speaking at the foundation-laying and inauguration ceremony of various works, including at KPS School premises in Yadrami, organized jointly by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Kalyana Karnataka Development Board, the CM inaugurated projects and distributed benefits to beneficiaries.

In the newly announced Yadrami taluk of the Jevargi constituency, 87 projects worth ₹867.49 crore were inaugurated, and an additional 38.29 crore worth of works had foundation stones laid, totaling ₹906 crore in development expenditure.

Criticizing opposition parties, Siddaramaiah said they spread falsehoods for political gains, alleging the government lacks funds for basic infrastructure, which he refuted, pointing to the ₹906 crore spent in Jevargi alone. Highlighting government accountability, he noted over ₹1.12 lakh crore has been allocated, with all promised programs implemented within the first year in line with pre-election assurances.

Siddaramaiah also underlined support for farmers: ₹1,072 crore was provided as crop loss compensation for 14.21 lakh affected farmers statewide, including ₹498 crore for 3.23 lakh farmers in Kalaburagi. Relief measures included ₹233 crore for chickpea crops affected by disease and ₹300 crore for sugarcane farmers. The CM highlighted infrastructure achievements, including laying foundations for 300 Karnataka Public Schools and approving 97 district offices in 17 taluks of Kalyana Karnataka. He stressed that BJP allegations are false, emphasizing that key initiatives like 371-J were possible due to efforts of Mallikarjun Kharge and Dharma Singh, not BJP. Prominent attendees included AICC leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, D.K. Shivakumar, ministers Priyanka Kharge, Krishnabhairya Gouda, Channabasappa Darshanapur, Sharan Prakash Patil, Madhu Bangarappa, Rahim Khan, and local MLAs.

District Admin Prioritises Comprehensive Devpt: DC G. Prabhu

CHIKKABALLAPUR

District Collector G. Prabhu said priority is being given to overall development of Chikkaballapur district by resolving long-pending land and revenue-related issues, including podi (sub-division) rectification, mutation (phodi) corrections, inheritance khata transfers, and government land grant cases. Addressing a press conference at the District Collector's Office, he said around 32,000 applications related to government land grants for landless families are pending in the district, of which nearly 3,000 are in the final stage. All such lands will be surveyed, boundaries identified, and podi rectification carried out on a priority basis.He said habitations with at least 10 houses within 157 gram panchayat limits will be identified as revenue or sub-revenue villages. Families residing there—whether on government or private land—will be provided permanent ownership documents through coordinated efforts of Panchayat Development Officers and Village Accountants. The Collector noted that ownership records of over two lakh land parcels remain unsettled due to the death of original owners. Through a special inheritance khata campaign, the Revenue Department will ensure legal transfer of these lands to rightful heirs.

Utilise Cooperative Society Services: Munikrishnappa

DEVANAHALLI

Emphasising the importance of cooperative institutions, Sri Valmiki Cooperative Society President Munikrishnappa (Tammaiah) urged members to conduct their financial transactions within the society and make full use of the facilities provided to achieve economic progress.

He was speaking after releasing the 2026 calendar of the Sri Valmiki Cooperative Society Limited at its office on BB Road, Devanahalli, followed by the society's general body meeting. Munikrishnappa said the society was established with the objective of strengthening the Valmiki community economically.

Various loan facilities and skill-development programmes have been introduced, and members should actively utilise them while supporting the growth of the society through regular transactions.

Vice-President G. Radhakrishna stated that while membership is currently extended to members of the Valmiki community, banking and loan facilities will be available to people from all communities. He announced that the society would officially begin operations from January 16. Highlighting that all facilities available in private banks are also offered by the cooperative, he appealed to members to prefer the cooperative over private banks, as this would strengthen the institution and enable it to extend loans to more people.

He further informed that the society would provide loans to women's self-help groups, offer tailoring machine training, computer training for members' children, and facilitate free driving licences for economically backward sections. More community-oriented programmes will be organised in the future to foster unity and development.

Director Naveen Koramangala said applications are being invited for tailoring machines, computer training, and driving licences, and interested members should submit applications with required documents at the society's office.

Several directors, office-bearers, women representatives, and community members were present during the general meeting and calendar release programme.

₹1.10L Cr Spent on Guarantee Schemes: Dinesh Gooligowda

CHITRADURGA

The Karnataka government has spent ₹1.10 lakh crore so far on implementing its five guarantee schemes, providing economic and social security to people across the State, said Dinesh Gooligowda, State Vice-Chairperson of the Guarantee Schemes Implementation Authority.

Addressing a review meeting of guarantee schemes at the Holalkere Taluk Panchayat hall, he said more than ₹293 crore has been spent in Holalkere taluk alone, directly benefiting residents. Alongside welfare spending, the government has also allocated ₹1.36 lakh crore in the Budget for development works, thereby ensuring both social and developmental guarantees.

Gooligowda noted that Karnataka's five guarantee schemes have gone beyond the State and reshaped national debates on governance and welfare. The "guarantee model," focused on poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, and social security, has set a new benchmark across the country. Direct transfer of benefits to beneficiaries' bank accounts has ensured transparency and accountability, he added.

Students Shine at National Skating Roller Netball Championship 2025

DEVANAHALLI

Students from Oxford English School, Devanahalli, brought laurels to Karnataka by winning the silver medal and securing 2nd place in the 8th National Skating Roller Netball Championship 2025, held in Hyderabad on December 25-26.

Representing Karnataka, the girls' team led by Lochana R. – including Kushala R., Chinmayi S. Gowda, Varsha Prasad Kulkarni, Nurjahan Pathan, and Tayyaba Pathan – showcased exceptional skill, teamwork, and determination to clinch the second spot. The boys' team, led by Hitesh A. Gowda, featuring Prithvi Raj A.M., Bharat Gowda A.M., Chinmay V.S., and Hrutik Bhagal from Jamkhandi, secured 4th place, demonstrating remarkable sportsmanship and competitive spirit.

The championship brought together top teams from across India, including Kerala, Telangana, Delhi, Goa, Tamil Nadu, and Jammu & Kashmir, making the event highly competitive and thrilling.

The students' achievement was lauded by Oxford English School officials, including Secretary M. Ramachandra Gowda, Administrative Officer K.M. Subbaiya, Principal Chhaya V. Pawar, and the school faculty. The Karnataka team was led and trained by Prithvi Kant, Association Secretary, along with coaches and Manager Veerabhadra N.

This remarkable performance has highlighted the talent and dedication of Devanahalli's youth, inspiring future athletes in the region and strengthening Karnataka's presence in national roller netball competitions.

The championship served as a platform for students to gain experience, improve skills, and compete with some of the finest teams from across the country.

Chitradurga Gears Up for Grand, Meaningful Republic Day Celebrations

CHITRADURGA

The Chitradurga district administration has begun preparations to ensure that the Republic Day celebrations on January 26 are conducted in a vibrant and meaningful manner. Chairing a preparatory meeting at the Deputy Commissioner's office, Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh instructed officials to make comprehensive arrangements for the event, emphasising coordination among all departments. Republic Day, symbolising patriotism, national pride and respect for the Constitution, will be celebrated at 9 a.m. on January 26 at the Government Science College grounds (Murugha Rajendra Stadium) in Chitradurga city. The District Incharge Minister will hoist the national flag. The Deputy Commissioner directed that invitations be printed in accordance with protocol, including the names of ministers, MPs, MLAs and heads of boards and corporations, and that officials personally invite public representatives. The City Municipal Council has been instructed to clean and decorate the venue, provide adequate drinking water cans and glasses, and illuminate major city junctions ahead of the celebrations. Departments including Public Works, Panchayat Raj Engineering and Nirmiti Kendra will arrange the stage, shamiana, sound system and seating with proper barricading.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

NAME CHANGE

I, **ARIF PASHA**, S/o Late Mohammed Usman, resident of at Elahi Akhtar Orchard, 3rd Floor, No.13, A, 2nd Street, Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, Bangalore-560051, have changed my name to **ADAM PASHA**, vide affidavit dated: 08.01.2026, before Notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

PUBLIC NOTICE

1. This is to notify the general public that my client Venkatesh, s/o Dundu Madhaiah, age about 46 years, R/@ no 32,, 'K' main road, 1st black, 2nd stage, Nagarabhavi, Bangalore 560072 has entered agreement to sale the property more fully described in the schedule hereunder and hereinafter referred to as the schedule property, from its lawful present owners Smt. 1. Kamalamma, w/o Shambulingaiah, age about 45 years 2. S.Bharatha, S/o Shambulingaiah, age about 27 years, 3. S.Bhindu, D/o Shambulingaiah, age about 25 years, 1 to 3 all are residing atR/@ Shattihalli Village, Maluru Hobali, Channapatanna,(tq), Ramanagara (D) the immovable property agreed upon by us as though agreement to sale vide agreement and it was registered 08/04/2021 that duly registered before the Ramanagarasub registrar as **Document No.MRN-1-00327-2021-22** in Book 1 and stored in C.D.No. RMND951.register at Ramanagarasub registrarmy client Venkatesh, s/o Dundu Madhaiahalready send the notice to above said persons twice but no such forwards to register the sale deed the property
Any persons/institutions claiming to have any rights, title, interest, charge, lien or minor claims whatsoever over the schedule property may lodge his/her/their/ its claim to the undersigned with documentary proof within five(5) days of this publication, failing which it will be presumed that there are no objections or claim or disputes in respect of the schedule property and my client shall proceed to get the schedule property conveyed in her favour. No claims shall be entertained thereafter.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that piece and parcel of property bearing Sy no. 57 measuring 1 Acra 35 Gunta, situated at Mayaganahallivillage, kasaba Hobali, Ramangara (tq), and bounded on: **EAST by:** land of venkatgiri **West by:** Land of Shivalingaiah **North by :** Road **South by:** government canal
H.SIDDESH, ADVOCATE, No 1380.2/1, 3rd cross , 3rd 'C' Main, 'E' block,Subramanyanarar, Rajajinagar 2nd stage, Bangalore – 560 010
MOBIL: 9900978372

PUBLIC NOTICE

**Public are informed that my client Mr. C. Nagendra S/o Venkobaiah, residing at: 19A/110/75, Ward No. 8, Rajakempegowda Badavane, 2nd Stage, 9th phase, Appagere Main Road, Channapatna Taluk, Bangalore South District–562160.
Our client has lost previous Sale deed in Channapatna Bus Stand the Original Registered Sale Deed bearing document No. CAN-1-07276-2011-12, date 16-02-2012, registered in the Office of the Sub-Registrar Channapatna, executed by Sri. H. Manjappa S/o Hanumanthappa, in favour of Sri S. Jayanna S/o Chikkaboregowda @ Sannappa in respect of the All that piece and parcel of the Khanesumari No. 19A/110/75, measuring East to West: 30 feet, North to South: 40 feet Situated at, Thittamaranahalli Grama Panchayat, Mangalavarapete Village, Kasaba Hobli, Channapatna Taluk, Bangalore South District, bounded on: East by: Site No. 74, West by: Site No. 76, North by: A Road left open to roam, South By: Appagere Gramatana. The said property is in possession of Mr. C. Nagendra since from 14-09-2015, he is the absolute owner and is absolutely free from any encumbrance whatsoever.
My Client had lost the above mentioned & Inspite of several efforts the Original deeds not found and he has lodged the police complaint through online dated 12-01-2026, Lost Report No. 2004392/2026.
If any person found or anyone having any claim or interest over the said property, he/she is requested to forward their claims along with the relevant documents to us within 07 days of this public notice. If we do not receive any claim from any person within 07 days, it will be strictly presumed that this property is absolutely free from any claim or encumbrance and no one has any claim over this property and if any One found the above deed kindly contact below mentioned.
Contact Adresss:
Shivaswamy. S., Advocates, Mahadevappa Building, 1st Floor, 1st Room, Opp A.B.R. Tower, B.M. Road, Ramanagara–562159.**

NAME CHANGE

I, **ALEEMULLA KHAN**, S/o Imtiyaz Khan, resident of No. 74, 2nd Cross, Basava Nagar, Dr. BR Ambedkar College Road, KG Halli, Bengaluru-560045, have changed my name to **ALIM KHAN,** vide affidavit dated: 12.01.2026, before Notary SUMITHRA .N, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **HASEENA BHANU**, aged 58 years, W/o. Shoukath Pasha, residing at # 3554, V.P. Bore, Hunsur Town, Mysore District-571105, declare that **HASEENA BHANU** and **HASINA BANU** Both the names are belongs to one and the same person i.e., myself only. And continue my name in future **HASEENA BHANU**, vide affidavit dated: 12.01.2026 before notary H. DINESH, Hunsur.

CAUVERY NEERAVARI NIGAMA LIMITED
(A Govt. of Karnataka Enterprises)
Office of the Executive Engineer,
Manchanabele Project Division,
Bangalore South District, Ramanagara - 562 159.
Phone : 080 - 2978 2259. E-mail : eempdrmgm@gmail.com
Tender Notification No. : 13/2025-26 Date : 12-01-2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The CNNL hereby invites **Tender for the Different kinds of Works** under 4701 Head Account through **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in Portal for Kanakapura and Channapatana Constituency.**

The Last Date for Pre-Bid Meeting, Tender Submission, Opening of Technical Bid, Financial Bid Dates, EMD details and more Information can be Downloaded from the Website : https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in Portal and for further information please visit Office at working hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
C.N.N.L., M. P. Division,
Bangalore South District, Ramanagara.
DIPR/Ramanagar/562/Manipal/2025-26

**GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
MINOR IRRIGATION & GROUND WATER DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MINOR IRRIGATION & GROUND WATER DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT DIVISION, BELAGAVI.**
PH NO.0831-2463850 / FAX NO.0831-2423008
No.EE/MI&GWDDD/BGM/TND/AE1/2025-26/4724 Date: 12-01-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (KW-1,3&4)

As per KTTP Act-2000 and recent Amendments the Executive Engineer Minor Irrigation & Ground Water Development Department Division Belagavi has invited the Item rate tender through KPPP (https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in). Total 10 Nos. of Belagavi/Athani/Gokak Sub Divisions. Estimate Amount Highest Rs.840.00 Lakhs & Lowest Rs.07.00 Lakh. 1. For KW-4 work: Date of Pre-tender meeting:20-01-2026 at 11.00 AM, 2.Tender Receipt Last Date:21-01-2026 Evening 4.00 PM, 3. Tender Opening Date:22-01-2026 Evening 4.30 PM (if possible), 4. For Tender Details office address: Executive Engineer, Minor Irrigation & Ground Water Development Department Division Belagavi & www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/-Executive Engineer,
M.I & GWDD Division, Belagavi.
DIPR/BGM/RO-NO-1626/KSMCA/2025-26

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT SURGEON, SNR DISTRICT HOSPITAL, KOLAR
Phone No.08152-22203536, Email.dskolar@gmail.com
NO: SNR/SUP/RC/53/2025-26 Date: 05.01.2026

E -TENDER INVITATION (Call-4)

Bids are hereby invited for the supply of Drugs, Laboratory reagents and ortho implants on rate contract basis to SNR hospital, Kolar. Details of tender terms and conditions are available on E-tender portal **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** Tendering authority reserves the right to cancel any or all e-bids without assigning any reasons bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time. **(1)** Supply of Drugs and surgical items, IFT No: NO: SNR/SUP/RC/53/2025-26, Date: 05.01.2026, Estimated Cost Rs. 50 lakhs, EMD:1, 00,000/- , **Last date for submission 15.01.2026, 05:00 PM. (2)** Supply of Laboratory reagents and consumables, IFT No: NO: SNR/SUP/RC/54/2025-26, Date: 05.01.2026, Estimated Cost Rs.50 lakhs, EMD:1,00, 000/-, **Last date for submission 15.01.2026, 04:00 PM. (3)** Supply of Ortho and OMFS implants, IFT No: NO: SNR/SUP/ Implants/49/2025-26, Date: 05.01.2026, Estimated Cost Rs.50 lakhs, EMD:1,00,000/-, **Last date for submission 04.02.2026, 04:00 PM.**

**Sd/- DISTRICT SURGEON
SNR DISTRICT HOSPITAL, KOLAR**
DIPR/KOLAR/RO:435/KSMCA/2025-26

NAME CHANGE

I, **ABDUL RASHEED** (alias) BABU, residing at No. 15, 4th Cross, Bheemanna Layout, Kavalbyrasandra, Bengaluru-560032, have changed my name to **ABDUL RASHEED BABU**, vide affidavit dated: 09.01.2026, before Notary N.NAGAPPA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **ADAM PASHA**, S/o Late Allah Bakash, resident of at Elahi Akhtar Orchard, 3rd Floor, No.13, A, 2nd Street, Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, Bangalore-560051, have changed my Father name from ALLAH BAKASH, to **MOHAMMED USMAN** vide affidavit dated: 08.01.2026, before Notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

QUICK READ

Assam Police arrest fake doctor in Cachar district

Guwahati

Continuing its crackdown on illegal medical practice, the Assam Police in Cachar district have arrested another individual for allegedly practising medicine using forged qualifications, officials said on Monday. The accused has been identified as Shamim Ahmed Laskar, a resident of the Bhaga area under the Dholai police station limits. He was apprehended following a complaint alleging that he had been running a medical chamber without valid medical credentials. According to police, the arrest was made after a written complaint was submitted by Dr Abhijit Neog, Anti-Quackery and Vigilance Officer of the Assam Council of Medical Registration (ACMR).

ED attaches properties worth ₹ 2.66 crore

Raipur

The Raipur Zonal Office of the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has issued a Provisional Attachment Order (PAO) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, attaching eight immovable properties valued at approximately Rs 2.66 crore, an agency statement said on Monday. According to ED, these assets, consisting of land parcels and residential flats, were allegedly acquired by accused individuals Saumya Chaurasia and Nikhil Chandrakar in the names of their relatives, using proceeds of crime derived from illegal coal levy collection and extortion activities in Chhattisgarh.

NDA SLAMS RJD MP OVER ALLEGED ABUSE OF VOTERS

NDA leaders slammed an RJD MP after a viral video allegedly showed him abusing voters post-election in Bihar

PATNA

A political controversy has erupted in Bihar a day after a purported video surfaced showing Surendra Prasad Yadav, the Lok Sabha MP from Jehanabad, allegedly using abusive and offensive language against voters who did not support his party. The incident has triggered sharp reactions from leaders of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), who described the episode as disgraceful and emblematic of the political culture of the Rashtriya Janata Dal.

Leading the attack, Neeraj Kumar, a Member of the Legislative Council from the Janata Dal (United), accused Surendra Yadav of arrogance and a lack of accountability. He recalled that Yadav had represented the Belaganj Assembly constituency for 35 years but suffered a major political setback when his son was defeated by Manorma Devi, a widow candidate, first in a by-election and again in the 2025 Assembly elections. Neeraj Kumar said that despite such defeats, resorting to abusive language against voters was highly condemnable and exposed the true character of RJD leaders.

The criticism intensified with Ramkripal Yadav, BJP MLA and Bihar's Agriculture Minister, demanding strict disciplinary action from the RJD's top leadership. He alleged that the party's frustration after electoral losses was now being vented on the public, including members of the Yadav community—traditionally considered a strong support base of the RJD. Ramkripal Yadav warned that alienating this community could drastically reduce the party's political relevance in the state.

According to reports, the controversial incident occurred, January 11, when Surendra Prasad Yadav visited areas within his Jehanabad constituency following the RJD's crushing defeat in the Assembly elections. Local residents reportedly questioned him about the lack of development, which allegedly provoked the MP.

In the video, Yadav is heard saying that only 15,000 votes were polled in his favour from the area and questioning what could be done under such circumstances. He is also seen naming individuals while allegedly using offensive words.

'BJP's Fight in WB is Between Terrorism and Democracy'

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Giriraj Singh on Monday launched a scathing attack on the ruling Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal, asserting that the Bharatiya Janata Party's political struggle in the state is not a routine electoral contest but a decisive battle between terrorism and democracy. His remarks have further sharpened the political discourse in the state as parties prepare for the upcoming elections.

Targeting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Giriraj Singh alleged that her government has compromised national security and democratic values. He claimed that the BJP is fighting against what he described as a system that allegedly supports terrorists, encourages Bangladeshi infiltration, and follows appeasement politics. According to the Union Minister, the present dispensation must be removed from power to restore democracy and ensure the safety and stability of the state.

In West Bengal, the BJP is fighting a battle between terrorism and democracy, Singh said while addressing the political situation. He further alleged that the state government's policies have weakened law and order, forcing the BJP to position itself as the only viable alternative capable of safeguarding constitutional values and public security.

The comments come at a time of heightened political tension in West Bengal, with the BJP intensifying its campaign against the ruling party. Party leaders have increasingly highlighted issues of governance, corruption, and security as central themes of their electoral narrative.

Union Minister Giriraj Singh intensified BJP's attack on the Trinamool Congress, calling West Bengal's political battle one of democracy

Echoing Giriraj Singh's views, BJP MLA Pawan Singh said that the prevailing political atmosphere in the state reflects growing public dissatisfaction with the Trinamool Congress government. He pointed to the ruling party's frequent mention in corruption cases and suggested that public silence should not be mistaken for approval.

The people are against the ruling party. If they were happy, they would express it openly, Pawan Singh remarked, adding that voters are politically aware and actively forming opinions ahead of the elections. He expressed confidence that there is a real possibility of political change in the state this time.

Delivery rider assaulted, forced to squat

NEW DELHI

A delivery rider, identified as Rishabh Kumar, was brutally assaulted after being forced to squat like a chicken as a form of punishment at a Zepto store in Delhi's New Ashok Nagar area, police said on Monday. The incident took place, which falls under the jurisdiction of the New Ashok Nagar police station in East Delhi, and the entire episode was captured on CCTV cameras installed at the premises.

According to police officials, the assault allegedly followed an incident in which Rishabh took a perfume from the store and sprayed it on himself. This act was reportedly noticed by other employees present at the store. Following this, the delivery rider was allegedly subjected to humiliating treatment, during which he was forced to squat like a chicken before being brutally beaten by those present.

The New Ashok Nagar Police Station has registered a complaint in the matter and initiated an investigation. Officials said that the CCTV footage is being examined, and further action will be taken soon based on the findings.

A political row broke out in Kolkata after a Trinamool Congress poster near Swami Vivekananda's house drew BJP ire

Poster Row Erupts as BJP Accuses Trinamool Congress

KOLKATA

A fresh political controversy erupted in West Bengal on Monday over a poster featuring Abhishek Banerjee, the All India General Secretary of the Trinamool Congress, placed in front of the ancestral residence of Swami Vivekananda at Simla Street in North Kolkata. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) strongly objected to the poster, alleging that it glorified Abhishek Banerjee while completely omitting any image or representation of Swami Vivekananda, despite bearing the message Welcome, Crown Prince.

The BJP claimed that installing such a poster outside Swami Vivekananda's ancestral house, particularly on his birth anniversary, amounted to an insult to the revered spiritual leader. Monday marked the 163rd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, a day traditionally observed with tributes and commemorative events across the state.

Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, along with Union Minister and state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar, arrived at Simla Street early in the morning to pay homage to Vivekananda. Abhishek Banerjee is scheduled to visit the site later in the afternoon to offer his respects. The controversial poster was reportedly put up by Jorasanko MLA Vivek Gupta to welcome Banerjee.

Criticising the hoarding, Suvendu Adhikari said that Swami Vivekananda alone deserved to be called a crown prince. He alleged arrogance on the part of the ruling party for projecting the Chief Minister's nephew as a 'Yuvraj' at such a sacred location. Adhikari also claimed that local religious authorities had instructed that no political leader's photograph should be displayed at the site, an instruction he said was ignored.

Echoing similar sentiments, Sukanta Majumdar launched a sharp verbal attack, alleging that criminal elements now frequent areas once associated with Vivekananda. He urged the people of Bengal to reject such forces, warning that otherwise the state would fail to nurture leaders of Vivekananda's stature again.

APEDA's new office in Raipur to strengthen agri exports

NEW DELHI

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) on Monday said it has inaugurated a regional office in Raipur to boost agri and processed food exports from Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh offers significant export potential across a wide range of products, including premium non-basmati rice varieties and Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged products such as Jeeraphool Rice and Nagri Dubraj Rice. According to Commerce Ministry, the state also produces a variety of fruits and vegetables including guava, banana, dragon fruit, jackfruit, custard apple, tomato and cucumber, along with important minor forest produce such as mahua, tamarind.

11 lakh leave Chennai; public transportation under strain

CHENNAI

An estimated 11 lakh people left Chennai for various parts of Tamil Nadu and neighbouring states over the weekend ahead of the Pongal festival, triggering a massive surge in demand for public transport and heavy congestion on major highways.

Railways handled the bulk of the festive rush. A total of 97 trains departed from Chennai Central and 85 trains from Chennai Egmore and Tambaram on Saturday and Sunday. Together, these services have the capacity to carry around 3.65 lakh passengers per day.

Railway sources said that over the past two days alone, more than seven lakh passengers are estimated to have travelled by train from the city. To ease the demand, additional special trains were operated to Tirunelveli, Nagercoil, Tiruchy and other key destinations.

Road travel, however, was marked by long delays. National highways leading out of the city witnessed heavy congestion, particularly the GST Road, where vehicle queues stretched from Tambaram to Guduvanchery for several hours.

Traffic police deployed additional personnel and diversions at key junctions to manage the flow, but the volume of vehicles continued to test road capacity through the weekend.

The State Transport Department said bus services were significantly ramped up to accommodate travellers.

In an official statement, the department said that 5,510 buses were operated from the Kilambakkam, CMBT and MMBT bus termini over the weekend, ferrying around 2.47 lakh commuters.

As of January 11, about 2.18 lakh passengers had already reserved tickets in government buses. Officials added that, in addition to 2,092 regular services operated daily, a total of 10,245 special buses have been planned between January 9 and 14 to meet the festive demand.

ECI cautions micro-observers of disciplinary action

KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India has cautioned the micro-observers in West Bengal of strong disciplinary action in case of any deliberate deviation from the ECI-prescribed standard operating procedure (SOP) for them. The micro-observers have been appointed for the supervision of the hearing sessions on claims and objections on the draft voters' list, which is the ongoing second level of the three-stage Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in the state.

The development is significant since the 3,500 micro-observers appointed, especially, for West Bengal have been selected from either the Central government or those from the central public sector undertakings or public sector banks, most in the Group-B category and a few in the Group-A category.

Since they are Central government or Central PSU or PSU bank employees, on which the Union government has full control, initiating disciplinary proceedings against them in case of deliberate deviation from the ECI- prescribed SOP would be far easier than doing the same for electoral registration officers (EROs), assistant electoral registration officers (AERIs) and booth-level officers (BLOs), who are state government employees or teachers of state-run schools, explained an insider from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), West Bengal.

Ajit Pawar promises freebies; BJP counters

PUNE

The political atmosphere in Pune has escalated to a critical juncture as Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and the BJP's top guns, including Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil, are embroiled in a significant verbal confrontation regarding the issue of freebie politics.

The conflict intensified after Deputy CM and NCP chief Ajit Pawar, representing the Nationalist Congress Party, promised free PMPML (Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited) bus and Metro services in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad in their joint manifesto, titled 'Ashtasutri Pragati (Eight-Point Progress)'.

In a strategic move to woo voters, Dy CM Ajit Pawar claimed that making public transport free is financially viable. He argued that if the Municipal Corporation allocates Rs 5 crore monthly for the Metro and Rs 20 crore for PMPML (totalling roughly Rs 300 crore annually), free travel could become a reality within three years of the NCP coming to power. This announcement has reportedly rattled the BJP leadership, who recently released their own 'Sankalp Patra' (Vision Document) focused on a Developed Pune.

Incidentally, NCP and BJP are engaged in a friendly fight, but due to political rhetoric between the two, the contest has become fierce. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has openly criticised fellow Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's campaign promise of providing free bus and metro travel to residents of Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, calling it unrealistic and legally unfeasible. He remarked, I was actually thinking of announcing today that all flights taking off from Pune should be free for women. What does it take to make an announcement? It costs us nothing to make tall claims.

He suggested that such promises often stem from political insecurity. He stated that politicians sometimes release unrealistic manifestos out of desperation when they realise they might not win.

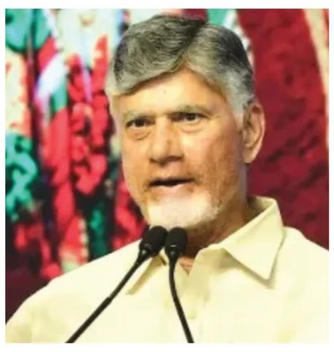
POLAVARAM WATER DISPUTE

AP CM Defends Polavaram–Nallamalla Sagar Link

AMARAVATI

Amid the ongoing dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana over the sharing of river waters, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday strongly defended the proposed Polavaram–Nallamalla Sagar link project, asserting that it would not cause harm to any state and would instead ensure optimal utilisation of surplus water from the Godavari River.

Speaking at a meeting with ministers and secretaries at the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat, the Chief Minister questioned the objections being raised to the diversion of surplus Godavari waters. He said there was nothing wrong with using water released from upstream and diverting it at Polavaram to Nallamalla Sagar. Naidu emphasised that he had never opposed Telangana's irrigation projects in the past and stressed that both Telugu-speaking states could efficiently utilise the vast Godavari water resources through mutual understanding and coordination.



Reiterating his commitment to the iconic Polavaram Project, Naidu said the project would be completed and dedicated to the nation before the upcoming Godavari Pushkaram. Describing Polavaram as a magnificent project, he claimed that once it is completed, no other state in South India would be able to compete with Andhra Pradesh in terms of irrigation potential, water availability, and agricultural growth.

Highlighting the issue of water wastage, the Chief Minister pointed out that nearly 3,000 TMC of water flows unused into the sea every year. He said initiatives such as Pattiseema have already helped divert Godavari water to the Krishna delta, saving storage in Srisailam and enabling the transfer of water to the drought-prone Rayalaseema region. According to him, the proposed Nallamalla Sagar project presents a significant opportunity to supply water to Rayalaseema, Prakasam, and other water-scarce regions of the state. Naidu also maintained that Telangana would stand to benefit from the project, as the neighbouring state would have the opportunity to utilise surplus water from Polavaram without any disadvantage.

QUICK READ

CBI court sentences PNB officials in ₹ 4 cr bank fraud case

New Delhi

A CBI court has convicted and sentenced two former Punjab National Bank (PNB) officials in connection with a Rs 4 crore bank fraud case involving the Jor Bagh branch in New Delhi, an official statement said on Monday. The convicted public servants are Kulvinder Kaur Johar, then Chief Manager and Branch Head, and Ranjiv Suneja, then Senior Manager of PNB's Jor Bagh branch. The court sentenced both to three years' rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 75,000 each. The bank's panel advocate, Narendra Singh Parihar, was also convicted and sentenced to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment with a fine of Rs 50,000.

Dasuwal gang's 7 associates held for ex-sarpanch murder

Chandigarh

Solving the murder of former sarpanch Jharmal Singh, Punjab Police on Monday claimed to have arrested seven accused, including two assailants, in a major blow to the Prabh Dasuwal gang. Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said investigations have established gangster Prabh Dasuwal as the mastermind behind the murder, committed due to old enmity, underscoring the pre-planned and targeted nature of the crime. The DGP, accompanied by Additional Director General of Police (Counter Intelligence) Amit Prasad, Inspector General of Police (Headquarters) Sukhchain Singh Gill and Commissioner of Police Amritsar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar, said the breakthrough reflected the resolve of the police to act decisively against organised crime.

Pune Emerges as Political Flashpoint

Pune has become a political battleground as alliance partners Ajit Pawar and Devendra Fadnavis clash over control

PUNE

The political landscape in Pune has turned into a high-stakes contest, with Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis increasingly at odds despite being part of the same ruling alliance. What was once perceived as routine coalition friction has now evolved into an open struggle for regional dominance, placing Pune at the centre of Maharashtra's political churn.

Recent developments indicate that the Bharatiya Janata Party is unwilling to concede Pune, long regarded as Ajit Pawar's political stronghold. The tension largely stems from Pawar's insistence on retaining decisive control over Pune's civic and administrative affairs—an approach that the BJP leadership has firmly resisted. This has resulted in a series of public disagreements, policy reversals, and sharp political exchanges between the two sides.

Several flashpoints have highlighted the growing divide. Proposals pushed by Pawar, including the division of the Pune Municipal Corporation into three separate entities and the introduction of free bus travel, were swiftly rejected by Chief Minister Fadnavis. The repeated rejection of these initiatives has been interpreted within political circles as a clear signal that the BJP is unwilling to allow unilateral decision-making by its coalition partner in Pune.

As the Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal elections draw closer, the confrontation has intensified. The BJP and the Ajit Pawar-led faction of the Nationalist Congress Party now find themselves in a direct face-off, even while sharing power at the state level. Within the broader Mahayuti alliance—which includes the BJP, the Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, and the Ajit Pawar faction—coordination has been uneven, with joint electoral contests reportedly limited largely to Kolhapur.

PM Modi Inaugurates Gujarat Regional Conference

RAJKOT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference in Saurashtra-Kutch, highlighting Gujarat's role in national growth

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference: Saurashtra-Kutch (VGRC 2026) along with a five-day business exhibition at Marwadi University, reaffirming the vision of Viksit Gujarat to Viksit Bharat. The event marks a significant push to strengthen regional development as a cornerstone of India's broader economic growth strategy.

Over the next two days, the conference will host more than 50 sector-focused seminars and thematic sessions, covering a wide spectrum of areas including industries, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, environment, startups, sustainability, and future technologies. These discussions aim to align policy frameworks with grassroots entrepreneurship while promoting innovation-led growth across the Saurashtra-Kutch region.

The five-day exhibition has emerged as a major highlight, serving as a vibrant platform to showcase innovation, entrepreneurship, and regional excellence. With participation from over 450 exhibitors, the exhibition reflects the diversity and depth of Gujarat's economy. It includes more than 160 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), 60 startups and innovators, 62 artisans, and 70 stalls representing central and state government departments.

Spread across six domes and covering a total area of 26,400 square metres, the exhibition has transformed the venue into a dynamic hub for business networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange. One of its key attractions is the Reverse Buyers-Sellers Meet (RBSM), which offers regional MSMEs a rare opportunity to engage directly with more than 110 international buyers.

For the first time, cottage industries are participating in exclusive interactions with over 20 international buyers, significantly expanding their global outreach. The initiative has received an overwhelming response, with more than 2,200 business meetings conducted within the first two days alone. Additionally, over 1,000 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have been signed, generating expectations of export business exceeding ₹500 crore.

Local businesses, industry leaders, startups, academic institutions, and technical students are participating enthusiastically, creating a unique confluence of ideas, innovation, and opportunity. The strong presence of youth and academic institutions has underscored the role of skill development and research in shaping Gujarat's future economy.

The Kerala High Court sharply criticised the SIT probing the Sabarimala gold theft case for serious investigative lapses

Kerala HC Raps SIT Over Failure to Arrest Accused in Sabarimala Case

KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Monday delivered a scathing rebuke to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the high-profile Sabarimala gold theft case, expressing strong displeasure over its failure to arrest key accused K.P. Sankaradas. The court questioned the credibility of the investigation and raised concerns over alleged preferential treatment extended to influential individuals.

A division bench made the observations while hearing the bail pleas of three accused — gold trader Govardhan, former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) President A. Padmakumar, and Murari Babu. The court adjourned the matter and said its judgment on the bail applications would be delivered at a later date.

During the hearing, the bench noted that Sankaradas, a former TDB member, has been hospitalised ever since he was named as an accused. The court expressed serious doubts over the reasons cited by the SIT for not arresting him, particularly pointing out that Sankaradas was accompanied to the hospital by his son, a senior police official. The bench questioned whether such circumstances justified his continued exemption from arrest.

How can such irregularities take place in this state? the court asked, adding that it could not accept either the conduct of the investigating officers or the manner in which the SIT was functioning. The judges remarked that the investigation appeared deeply flawed and lacked consistency in its approach towards different accused.

The court also took a critical view of the role played by sponsors and individuals linked to the administration of the Sabarimala Temple, observing that the probe seemed to be catching a big fish by using a small bait. This remark reflected the court's concern that the SIT might be selectively targeting certain accused while shielding others with political or institutional influence.

Reiterating accountability, the bench made it clear that Padmakumar could not escape responsibility for his alleged role in the case. Questioning the very relevance of the Devaswom Board, the court asked why such an institution exists if its responsibilities could effectively be handled by a single individual, Unnikrishnan Potti.

SC seeks ECI response on plea

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Election Commission of India (ECI) on pleas filed by Trinamool Congress MPs seeking extension of the January 15 deadline for filing claims and objections in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing the applications moved by MPs Derek O'Brien and Dola Sen raising concerns over alleged procedural irregularities in the SIR exercise being carried out by the poll body in the-Trinamool ruled stated. During the hearing, the counsel appearing for the ECI sought two weeks' time to file a counter-affidavit. However, the Supreme Court granted the ECI one week to respond and directed it to place a common reply on record in respect of both applications filed by the Trinamool MPs.The CJI Kant-led Bench also ordered that the matter be listed for further hearing next Monday.

Cong shows confidence ahead of BMC election

MUMBAI

With the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections just days away, the Congress on Monday expressed confidence about its prospects, saying the party is set to perform well in the upcoming civic polls. This comes days after the Mumbai Congress, on January 6, released its manifesto for the BMC Elections 2026.

The manifesto promises a series of welfare and development-oriented measures, including steps to improve air quality in the city and the introduction of universal health cards that would provide citizens with free medicines.

Congress leader Udit Raj said that people are increasingly inclined towards the Congress and disillusioned with politics based on religious polarisation.

People want the Congress. This is my own experience, and I am confident that the results will be good. Fighting elections on Hindu-Muslim lines is an old tactic of the BJP and Shiv Sena, he said.

He added that Maharashtra's social composition has changed over time.

The population today is mixed. The question people are asking is what they are getting in return. If the BMC cannot provide clean drinking water and good roads, and if thousands of workers are still not made permanent, then people will look for alternatives. That is why the Congress will perform well this time, Raj said.

Another Congress leader, Sachin Sawant, echoed similar views and said the party is focussed on development rather than divisive politics.

We have announced our slogan, 'Vivaad nahi, Vikas chahiye'. Congress is the party talking about development, while others are creating disputes in the name of religion, caste, and regional language. We do not expect anything constructive from them.

Maharashtra will vote to elect its BMC corporators on January 15. A total of 1,729 candidates are contesting the elections across 227 wards. The results for the country's richest civic body will be announced the following day, on January 16.

Yamuna cruise to kick off in Feb: Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra

NAVI MUMBAI

Delhi Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra on Monday inspected an under-construction boat to be used for the Yamuna cruise and announced that the Goa-type recreational boat cruises and ferry services will begin next month. Tentatively named Yamuna River Santosh Cruise, the Yamuna Boat Tourism and Ferry Infrastructure Development Project is likely to be inaugurated by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta next month, he said.

The project, located upstream of the Wazirabad Barrage between Sonia Vihar and Jagatpur in North East Delhi, is expected to provide a new green tourism experience to Delhiites and enhance connectivity through eco-friendly river travel.

The cruise boat will depart from Mumbai on January 20 and reach Delhi in 3 to 4 days. Its engine will be fitted in Delhi, and sometime in February, the CM will launch it. Along with this, other water sports activities are also set to begin.

Mishra said the Delhi government is all geared up to offer an international luxury experience, along with recreation activities, at affordable prices. As part of efforts to promote inland water transport and short-distance urban tourism, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) is helping the Delhi government to develop facilities along a 6-7 km round-trip corridor between Sonia Vihar and Jagatpur for Rs 20 crore.

On June 21, Chief Minister Gupta and Mishra performed Yoga to celebrate International Yoga Day at the Water Sports Club on the banks of the Yamuna in Sonia Vihar and announced plans to start the cruise service. CM Gupta took part in Yoga with the theme 'Yoga with Yamuna' and reiterated her resolve to clean the river. She asserted that her government is working with seriousness to ensure that untreated water from drains does not enter the river and that every drop flowing into the Yamuna is clean.

Youth key to achieving 'Developed Rajasthan' goal: Rajasthan CM

JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Monday emphasised that active youth participation is vital to achieving the vision of a Developed Rajasthan, noting that India is a young nation and its youth form the backbone of both the country and the state. Addressing students from various educational institutions during a pre-budget dialogue at the Chief Minister's residence, Sharma said the goals of a Developed India and a Developed Rajasthan can be realised through the energy, innovation and determination of young people.

Extending greetings on National Youth Day, he said Swami Vivekananda continues to inspire generations, urging youth to remain focused and resolute in pursuing their aspirations. "When the youth progress, the nation and the state move forward," he remarked.

The Chief Minister said the state government is committed to inclusive youth development and is working towards a youth-centric budget to accelerate growth.

KERALA FUNDS DISPUTE

'Finance Commission Funds Are Constitutional Right'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday strongly countered Union Home Minister Amit Shah's assertion that the state had benefited from increased central funding under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. Vijayan maintained that transfers recommended by the Finance Commission are not acts of generosity by the Centre but constitutional entitlements of states.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while inaugurating a day-long protest organised by the Left Democratic Front (LDF), attended by Cabinet ministers and party leaders. The protest was staged against what Vijayan described as the Centre's callous attitude towards Kerala's long-pending and legitimate demands.

The distribution of funds through Finance Commissions is not anyone's largesse. It is the constitutional entitlement of states, Vijayan said, accusing the Union government of deliberately tampering with the terms of reference and criteria of the Finance Commission to deprive Kerala of its rightful share of central taxes.

To substantiate his claims, the Chief Minister cited comparative figures from successive Finance Commissions. Under the 14th Finance Commission, Kerala received ₹16,833 crore in 2017–18 and ₹19,038 crore in 2018–19. However, during the tenure of the 15th Finance Commission, the state received ₹11,560 crore in 2020–21, followed by ₹17,890 crore in 2021–22 and ₹18,961 crore in 2022–23.

In effect, Kerala's tax share has declined compared to the previous Commission period. Such a reduction has never happened before, Vijayan said, arguing that the figures clearly demonstrate a structural reduction in the state's share of central taxes.

He further pointed out that a significant portion of the assistance Kerala received during the 15th Finance Commission period came in the form of revenue deficit grants. Emphasising that these grants were also a matter of right, Vijayan said they were secured only after states collectively opposed what he called the Centre's discriminatory approach. They were not handed out as charity. Without these grants, the decline in devolution would have been even steeper, he added.

QUICK READ

Thousands of tourists stranded in Lapland as cold grounds flights

Lapland

Thousands of tourists have been stranded in Finland's Lapland as a severe cold spell has grounded flights out of one of its airports. Departures from Lapland's Kittila airport that would have ferried winter travellers back to places like London, Bristol, Manchester, Paris and Amsterdam were all cancelled as temperatures did not go above -35C. The issue is expected to continue on Monday as a low of -39C is forecast by Finland's meteorological agency. The first flight out of Kittila has already been cancelled. The extreme cold makes it hard to de-ice planes, while maintenance and refuelling equipment on the ground can freeze.

Meta blocks 550,000 accounts under Australia's media ban

Auckland

About 550,000 accounts were blocked by Meta during the first days of Australia's landmark social media ban for kids. In December, a new law began requiring that the world's most popular social media sites - including Instagram and Facebook - stop Australians aged under 16 from having accounts on their platforms. The ban, which is being watched closely around the world, was justified by campaigners and the government as necessary to protect children from harmful content and algorithms. Companies including Meta have said they agree more is needed to keep young people safe online. However they continue to argue for other measures, with some experts raising similar concerns.

One person dead and 300 buildings destroyed

Sydney

One person has died and 300 properties have been destroyed in bushfires that have torn across south-east Australia. The fires have raged in dozens of locations across the country for several days, mostly in the state of Victoria, but also in New South Wales, burning through land almost twice the size of Greater London. A state of emergency has been declared in Victoria as thousands of firefighters and more than 70 aircraft battle the blaze. Residents in more than a dozen communities have been advised to leave their homes. Authorities fear the fires, which are being fuelled by very hot, dry and windy conditions, could burn for several weeks.

Trump Signals Possible Talks With Iran as Protests Escalate

President Donald Trump signaled possible engagement with Iran while weighing military options amid escalating protests challenging clerical rule.

TEHRAN

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that the United States may hold meetings with Iranian officials and is also in contact with opposition elements, as Washington considers a range of strong responses to Iran's violent crackdown on nationwide protests. The unrest is being described as one of the most serious challenges to Iran's ruling clerical establishment since the Islamic Revolution.

Speaking amid rising tensions, Trump indicated that all options remain on the table, including military measures, while leaving the door open for diplomatic engagement. According to U.S. officials, the administration is closely monitoring the situation as Iranian security forces intensify efforts to suppress demonstrations that have spread across several cities. The protests, driven by public anger over governance, economic hardship, and political restrictions, have drawn international attention and renewed scrutiny of Tehran's human rights record.

Trump's comments suggest a dual-track approach—applying pressure while keeping channels for dialogue open. He said the U.S. may directly engage Iranian representatives, even as it maintains communication with opposition groups critical of the current regime. Analysts say this reflects Washington's attempt to balance deterrence with diplomacy at a moment of heightened instability in the Middle East.

Responding to the developments, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi struck a defiant yet nuanced tone. Addressing foreign ambassadors in Tehran on Monday, Araqchi said Iran was prepared for both confrontation and negotiations. We are ready for war but also for dialogue, he stated, according to an English translation of his remarks.

Araqchi accused external powers of exploiting internal unrest to weaken Iran and warned that any foreign intervention would be met with firm resistance. At the same time, his comments suggested that Tehran does not rule out diplomatic engagement if it is based on mutual respect and sovereignty.

UN Top Court Opens Landmark Genocide Case Against Myanmar

UNITED NATIONS

The International Court of Justice began a landmark genocide case against Myanmar over alleged crimes against Rohingya Muslims.

The world's highest judicial body, the International Court of Justice, on Monday opened a landmark case accusing Myanmar of committing genocide against its mostly Muslim Rohingya minority. The proceedings, being held in The Hague, mark one of the most significant international legal actions concerning alleged mass atrocities in recent years.

Presenting arguments before the court, Gambia's Justice Minister Dawda Jallow accused Myanmar's military of deliberately targeting the Rohingya community with the intent to destroy it. Addressing the ICJ judges, Jallow said the case went beyond abstract legal principles and centred on the suffering of real people. It is about real people, real stories and a real group of human beings — the Rohingya of Myanmar. They have been targeted for destruction, he said.

The case was filed by The Gambia in 2019, two years after Myanmar's military launched a massive offensive in 2017 that forced around 750,000 Rohingya to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. Refugees who crossed the border described widespread atrocities, including mass killings, sexual violence, and systematic arson attacks that razed entire villages.

A United Nations fact-finding mission later concluded that the 2017 operations by Myanmar's armed forces included genocidal acts. However, authorities in Myanmar have consistently rejected those findings, maintaining that the military campaign was a legitimate counterterrorism response to attacks allegedly carried out by Rohingya armed groups.

The trial is the first full genocide case taken up by the ICJ in more than a decade, underscoring its legal and political significance. Legal experts say the outcome could have far-reaching implications beyond Myanmar, potentially influencing other international cases dealing with allegations of genocide. Observers note that the proceedings may also affect how the court approaches similar petitions, including South Africa's case against Israel related to the war in Gaza. The hearings are expected to span three weeks, during which both sides will present detailed legal arguments and evidence.

Hong Kong Court Hears Final Plea for Jimmy Lai Ahead of Sentencing

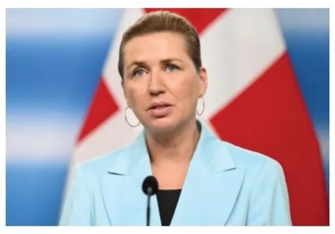
TAIPEI

Hong Kong's High Court on Monday heard mitigation pleas for pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai, the final step before sentencing in a landmark national security case that has drawn widespread international condemnation. The outcome is seen as a critical test of judicial independence and press freedom under Beijing's national security framework. Lai, 78, founder of the now-shuttered Apple Daily, faces a possible life sentence after being convicted last month of conspiring to collude with foreign forces and to publish seditious material. Defence lawyers urged leniency, citing his age, poor health, political motivations and years already spent in custody. Prosecutors argued that Lai's influence and foreign connections made the offences especially serious. The case has become emblematic of Hong Kong's post-2020 crackdown on dissent.

Denmark warned of a decisive moment for Greenland after Donald Trump renewed threats to seize the Arctic territory.

Denmark Warns of Decisive Moment for Greenland

STOCKHOLM



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that Denmark is facing a decisive moment over the future of Greenland after United States President Donald Trump renewed his threats to take control of the vast, mineral-rich Arctic territory by force. Her remarks come amid growing international unease over rising geopolitical competition in the Arctic region.

Speaking ahead of meetings in Washington, DC, beginning Monday and focused on the global scramble for critical raw materials, Frederiksen said the situation surrounding Greenland had escalated into a clear conflict. Addressing a debate with other Danish political leaders, she stressed that the stakes extended well beyond Greenland alone. This is a decisive moment, she said, signalling that the issue touches upon broader principles of international order, security, and sovereignty.

In a post on Facebook, Frederiksen said Denmark was prepared to stand firm in defence of its core values. Denmark is ready to defend our values – wherever it is necessary – also in the Arctic, she wrote. Emphasising international norms, she added that Denmark believes in international law and in the right of peoples to self-determination, a clear reference to Greenland's status as a self-governing territory within the Danish realm.

Greenland, which holds strategic importance due to its location and vast reserves of rare earths and other critical minerals, has increasingly become a focal point in global power competition, particularly as climate change opens new Arctic shipping routes and resource opportunities.

Frederiksen's warning drew swift support from several European partners. Germany and Sweden publicly backed Denmark against Trump's latest statements. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson strongly criticised what he described as threatening rhetoric from Washington after Trump reiterated that the United States was going to do something on Greenland, whether they like it or not.

Finland Lifts Seizure of Ship in Undersea Cable Sabotage Probe

HELSINKI

Finnish police said on Monday that they have lifted the seizure of a ship that had been detained on suspicion of sabotaging an undersea telecommunications cable running between Helsinki and Estonia across the Gulf of Finland. Authorities clarified that while the vessel has been released, the criminal investigation into the incident is still ongoing.

According to the police, the ship had been held as part of a preliminary inquiry after damage was detected to a critical telecoms cable connecting Helsinki and Estonia. The cable runs beneath the Gulf of Finland and is considered an important component of regional digital infrastructure. Officials did not disclose further technical details of the damage or the specific reasons for lifting the seizure, citing the sensitivity of the ongoing investigation.

The case has drawn heightened attention due to growing security concerns in the Baltic Sea region. Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the region has experienced a series of unexplained outages involving power cables, telecommunications links, and gas pipelines. These incidents have raised fears of deliberate sabotage targeting critical infrastructure, prompting increased vigilance among Nordic and Baltic states.

Finnish authorities stressed that all possibilities remain under examination, including accidental damage and intentional interference. Police said international cooperation is a key part of the probe, given the cross-border nature of undersea infrastructure and maritime traffic in the Baltic Sea. Estonia has also been kept informed of developments, officials added.

South Korea's Lee Jae Myung to Meet Japan's Sanae Takaichi

SEOUL

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung is set to hold a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Tuesday, just a week after his high-profile meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The back-to-back engagements underline Seoul's efforts to carefully balance its diplomatic relationships with its two powerful neighbours amid shifting regional dynamics.

The summit, scheduled to take place in Nara, comes at a time of rising diplomatic tension between Beijing and Tokyo. Analysts view the meeting as a strategic opportunity for South Korea to reaffirm its commitment to regional stability while maintaining constructive ties with both China and Japan, despite their increasingly strained relationship.

According to diplomatic observers, Prime Minister Takaichi is expected to emphasise the importance of strong trilateral cooperation between the United States, Japan, and South Korea. The three-way partnership has been increasingly framed by Tokyo and Washington as a cornerstone for security and economic stability in East Asia, particularly in response to North Korea's missile programme and broader geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific.

For President Lee, the summit follows his recent talks with Xi Jinping, which focused on economic cooperation, regional security, and the management of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. By engaging closely with both Beijing and Tokyo in quick succession, Lee is signalling Seoul's intent to avoid being drawn into zero-sum rivalries and instead pursue a pragmatic, multi-aligned foreign policy.

The Japan–South Korea relationship has historically been marked by disputes over wartime history and trade issues, but recent years have seen renewed efforts to improve ties, driven largely by shared security concerns and pressure from Washington to strengthen cooperation among its key Asian allies. The meeting in Nara is expected to build on this momentum, with discussions likely to include defence coordination, supply chain resilience, and people-to-people exchanges.

At the same time, the backdrop of a growing diplomatic rift between China and Japan adds complexity to the talks. Analysts say Seoul will be keen to avoid appearing to side too strongly with either camp, particularly given South Korea's deep economic links with China and its security alliance with the United States.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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7		1		3			4	
9				7	4		8	5
	9			6		8		4
8		5	2		7		9	
3		7			8	2	5	
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5		6		8		4		7
4		8			1		6	

9	5	7	1	6	3	2	4	8
1	8	3	7	4	2	5	9	6
4	2	6	9	5	8	3	7	1
8	9	2	6	3	7	1	5	4
6	7	4	2	1	5	8	3	9
5	3	1	4	8	9	6	2	7
3	4	9	9	2	1	7	6	5
2	6	8	5	7	4	9	1	3
7	1	5	3	9	6	4	8	2

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

TRUMP POWELL PROBE

Trump Administration Opens Criminal Probe Into Fed Chair Jerome Powell

NEW YORK

The administration of United States President Donald Trump has opened a criminal investigation into Jerome Powell, a move that has triggered widespread concern about the independence of the US central bank and the future conduct of American monetary policy.

Powell revealed that the US Department of Justice had served the Federal Reserve with subpoenas related to testimony he delivered before Congress concerning the $2.5 billion renovation of the Federal Reserve's headquarters in Washington, DC. The Fed Chair suggested that scrutiny of the renovation project was being used as a pretext to exert pressure on the central bank and undermine its autonomy in setting interest rates.

In a rare video address, Powell warned that the investigation posed a direct challenge to the long-standing principle of central bank independence. The threat of criminal charges is a consequence of the Federal Reserve setting interest rates based on our best assessment of what will serve the public, rather than following the preferences of the president, he said.

Powell emphasised that the issue at stake went far beyond a construction project or administrative oversight. This is about whether the Fed will be able to continue to set interest rates based on evidence and economic conditions—or whether monetary policy will instead be directed by political pressure or intimidation, he stated.

The Federal Reserve Chair underscored that he had carried out his responsibilities without political bias, adhering strictly to the institution's dual mandate of maintaining price stability and achieving maximum employment. I have carried out my duties without political fear or favour, and with the sole purpose of serving the American people, Powell said, adding that public service often requires resilience in the face of threats.

I will continue to do the job the Senate confirmed me to do, with integrity and a commitment to serving the American people, he asserted. The investigation comes amid a long-running and highly public dispute between Trump and Powell.

QUICK READ

'Constructive' outlook on Indian equities

New Delhi

Indian equities have a constructive outlook due to a recovery in private capital expenditure, a robust real estate cycle, sustained government infrastructure spending, a report said on Monday. HSBC Mutual Fund also cited rising investments in manufacturing, renewables and supply chain localisation that support earnings visibility and market performance through 2026. We believe India's growth remains quite resilient despite the global macro-economic challenges. Interest rate and liquidity cycle, decline in crude prices and normal monsoon are all supportive of a pick-up in growth going forward, the report said.

Sensex recovers 1,100 points from day's low

Mumbai

Indian stock markets bounced back on Monday, ending their five-day losing streak after positive signals from the United States lifted investor confidence. Market sentiment improved sharply after US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said that the US and India would begin trade talks as early as Tuesday. His statement triggered fresh buying across key sectors, helping the benchmark indices recover strongly from their day's lows. The Sensex jumped nearly 1,100 points from its lowest level during the session. By the closing bell, the 30-share index settled at 83,878, gaining 302 points, or 0.36 per cent.

Educational institutions likely to peg 11-13 pc income

New Delhi

Rising enrolments and fee hikes will help educational institutions in India log an 11–13 per cent increase in total income in FY26 and the next fiscal year, a report said on Monday. The report from Crisil Ratings said that this fiscal will mark the sector's fifth straight year of double digit growth, driven largely by higher spending on education by households as incomes improve, the report said. It said operating margins are expected to remain steady at 27–28 per cent as institutions will incur higher staff salaries and other related costs, the report said.

India to Be Invited to Join US-Led Pax Silica Initiative

India will be invited to join the US-led Pax Silica initiative as bilateral trade talks maintain momentum.

NEW DELHI

India is set to receive an invitation next month to join Pax Silica, a United States–led strategic technology initiative focused on semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and critical supply chains, according to Sergio Gor. The announcement comes amid ongoing India–US trade negotiations, which both sides say remain active despite differences over tariffs and market access.

Speaking on Monday shortly after assuming charge in New Delhi, Gor said India and the United States are maintaining steady engagement on trade-related issues, with another round of discussions expected soon. He emphasised that negotiations have not stalled and that officials from both countries remain in regular contact. There are differences, but talks are continuing, he said, underlining that dialogue between the two democracies is progressing constructively.

Gor noted that follow-up meetings between Indian and American officials are already scheduled, though he did not disclose specific agenda items. He stressed that both governments are committed to keeping up the momentum in bilateral trade talks, signalling optimism about resolving outstanding issues through discussion.

Before formally entering office, the US envoy thanked Donald Trump for the opportunity to serve in India. He said his primary mission would be to strengthen ties between what he described as the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy. Gor also conveyed that President Trump had sent his best wishes to Narendra Modi, describing the relationship between the two leaders as genuine, resilient, and capable of withstanding disagreements.

Real friends can disagree, but resolve the difference, Gor said, referring to the ongoing trade negotiations and broader engagement between New Delhi and Washington.

A key highlight of his remarks was the confirmation that India will be invited as a full member of Pax Silica next month. Gor described the initiative as a major US-led effort, launched last month, to build a secure, resilient, and innovation-driven silicon and technology supply chain. He said India's inclusion would mark a significant expansion of India–US cooperation in critical and emerging technologies.

Madhya Pradesh Sets Ambitious Target

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh unveiled plans to expand its startup ecosystem at a major summit in Bhopal.

Bhopal witnessed a strong declaration of intent at the Madhya Pradesh Startup Summit and Ecosystem Awards 2026, held at Ravindra Bhavan, as the state government announced an ambitious plan to expand its startup base from 6,500 to 10,000 within the next year-and-a-half. The announcement underscored Madhya Pradesh's growing role in India's rapidly evolving entrepreneurial landscape.

Addressing the gathering, Raghvendra Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary (Industry) in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh, said the summit was not merely a reflection on past achievements but a strategic platform to align policy, administration, and entrepreneurship for future growth. He highlighted that India has emerged as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, with nearly 1.59 lakh startups registered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, over 100 unicorns, and around 16 lakh direct jobs generated nationwide.

Singh noted that Madhya Pradesh is already outperforming national averages in several areas. The state currently has nearly 3,100 women-led startups and aims to scale this number further under the Madhya Pradesh Startup Policy, 2025. He emphasised that women-led enterprises account for about 47 per cent of the state's startup ecosystem—almost three times the national average—reflecting the state's strong focus on inclusive growth.

The Startup Policy, 2025, offers extensive financial and infrastructural support to entrepreneurs. Key provisions include a ₹100 crore seed capital fund, grants of up to ₹30 lakh, interest subsidies, and subsistence allowances for early-stage founders. Additional inclusive measures support SC/ST entrepreneurs, provide incubation facilities across districts, and strengthen digital infrastructure to ensure startups can emerge beyond major urban centres.

These grants are not charity but smart economic initiatives for entrepreneurial mainstreaming, Singh remarked, citing successful ventures from districts such as Narmadapuram, Vidisha, and Harda as examples of decentralised innovation.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, in his address, underlined India's long-standing legacy of innovation, recalling the pioneering scientific contributions of Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose in fields such as plant sensitivity, microwaves, and semiconductors.

India, Germany ink slew of pacts to boost ties in trade, technology, renewable energy

NEW DELHI

Reiterating their support for the conclusion of the India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), India and Germany on Monday signed a slew of agreements across sectors such as trade, technology, health and renewable energy. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the two sides concluded 19 agreements and made several policy announcements aimed at deepening cooperation across strategic, economic and people-to-people domains.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz welcomed the sustained growth in bilateral trade and investment and noted that bilateral trade reached a record high in 2024, with the positive trend continuing through 2025. India-Germany bilateral trade in goods and services surpassed $50 billion in 2024, amounting to over 25 per cent of India's trade with EU. According to an official statement, the leaders welcomed the signing of a Joint Declaration of Intent on strengthening the bilateral economic cooperation through the German-Indian CEO Forum, which will further promote business and industry collaboration, supported by the long-standing presence of German businesses in India and Indian businesses in Germany.

South Korean trade agencies outlined plans to diversify exports and back major US investments under a landmark deal.

S. Korea Pledges Export Diversification

SEOUL

State-run trade agencies on Monday pledged stepped-up efforts to diversify South Korea's export portfolio and support large-scale corporate investments in the United States under a bilateral trade agreement. The commitments were outlined during a policy briefing to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources, highlighting Seoul's strategy to strengthen export resilience while deepening economic ties with Washington.

The Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and the Korea Trade Insurance Corp. (K-SURE) shared their plans for 2026, focusing on reducing overreliance on a narrow set of export sectors and providing financial backing for overseas expansion, particularly in the US market.

KOTRA said it will work to broaden South Korea's export base, which is currently heavily concentrated in semiconductors, automobiles and shipbuilding. To support this goal, the agency plans to establish 20 new teams across its overseas offices dedicated to helping Korean consumer goods firms obtain foreign certifications. It also aims to expand overseas logistics centres to improve supply chain efficiency and lower entry barriers for small and medium-sized exporters seeking to enter new markets.

K-SURE, meanwhile, announced plans to provide low-interest loans worth a combined 49 trillion won (about US$33.3 billion) by 2030 to support Korean companies investing in the United States. This includes an 8 trillion-won loan programme earmarked for this year alone, reflecting the government's push to accelerate outbound investment tied to the bilateral trade framework.

Under the trade deal sealed in October, Seoul committed to invest a total of US$350 billion in the United States. The package includes US$150 billion for bilateral shipbuilding cooperation and US$200 billion for collaboration in advanced industries such as semiconductors, clean energy and next-generation manufacturing, in exchange for tariff reductions on Korean exports. As part of this effort, K-SURE said it will create a 25 trillion-won financial support package for shipbuilders participating in the so-called Make American Shipbuilding Great Again initiative.

Youth hiring in India to grow by 11 pc by 2026

NEW DELHI

Youth hiring in India is projected to grow by 11 per cent by 2026, generating approximately 1.28 crore new jobs, according to a report on Monday. The report by NLB Services showed that IT services will account for around 30-40 per cent, manufacturing around 12 per cent, healthcare around 13 per cent, fintech around 20 per cent, logistics around 10.7 per cent, and green energy around 4 per cent of these roles.

As we mark Youth Day on the lines of 'Ignite the Self, Impact the World', India stands at a pivotal inflection point where its demographic dividend can translate into sustained economic acceleration if matched with the right skilling investments, said Sachin Alug, CEO, NLB Services.

With over 65 per cent of India's population below the age of 35 and an estimated 12 million youth set to enter the workforce by 2026, the urgency to build future-ready capabilities has never been higher, he added.

The report noted that demand for high-impact roles such as AI/ML engineers, data scientists, cybersecurity specialists, cloud architects, digital product managers, and sustainability professionals is expected to outpace supply.

It also flagged a significant opportunity gap in AI-skilling programmes, even as workplaces increasingly prioritise AI fluency and advanced digital competencies.

Alug said that structured upskilling, skill-aligned recruitment, and outcome-based talent models will be central to ensuring India's youth not only participate in, but actively power, the country's next phase of economic transformation.

The next phase of growth will be driven by skills across AI and machine learning, data science and analytics, cybersecurity, cloud and platform engineering, digital product management, automation, and green technology roles, Alug said.

Currently, only 45 per cent of youth are considered job-ready for high-growth tech and digital roles.

Maruti Suzuki approves Rs 4,960 crore land deal

NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India Limited, the country's largest car manufacturer, on Monday informed that its board has approved a Rs 4,960-crore proposal to acquire land for expansion of its manufacturing capacity in Gujarat.

The land acquisition is for the expansion of production capacity at Khoraj Industrial Estate from Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, and the proposed capacity addition is up to 1 million (10 lakh) units, Maruti Suzuki India said in an exchange filing.

The cost of land acquisition, development, and preparatory activities approved by the board is Rs 4,960 crore, it said, adding that the overall investment would be finalised and approved by the board while framing the phases of installation of capacity.

The mode of financing would be a combination of internal accruals and external borrowings, Maruti Suzuki India said.

The total existing capacity is around 24 lakh units per annum in Gurugram, Manesar, Kharkhoda, and Hansalpur, with a capability to produce 26 lakh units per annum. This includes the units produced at erstwhile Suzuki Motor Gujarat Private Limited, which has been amalgamated with the Company, the filing said.

The existing capacity is fully utilised, the vehicle manufacturer added.

The car manufacturer had produced over 22.55 lakh vehicles in 2025 -- its highest-ever output in a calendar year. This is the second consecutive year that Maruti Suzuki India has exceeded 20 lakh units in annual production. The production includes vehicles for domestic sales, exports, and OEM supplies.

Managing director and CEO of Maruti Suzuki, Hisashi Takeuchi, said that a high degree of localisation helped the company achieve such scale while maintaining the global competitiveness of India's automotive manufacturing ecosystem.

Apple's iPhone CY25 exports from India cross Rs 2 lakh cr

NEW DELHI

For the first time since domestic production began in 2021, US tech giant Apple Inc's iPhone exports from India crossed Rs 2 lakh crore in 2025, as per industry data. Exports of the tech company in January–December 2025 reached a record $23 billion or Rs 2.03 lakh crore, up nearly 85 per cent over 2024 exports. Around three months remain before Apple's five-year PLI window ends. Under the production-linked incentive scheme (PLI), Apple's focus in India had been expansion of the iPhones exports.

In the first nine months of FY26, iPhone exports stood at nearly $16 billion, pushing cumulative shipments during the PLI period beyond the $50-billion mark. By comparison, Samsung exported devices worth around $17 billion during its five-year eligibility period under the scheme from FY21 to FY25.

Apple's manufacturing footprint in the country includes five iPhone assembly plants—three operated by Tata Group entities and two by Foxconn—supported by a supply chain of around 45 companies, including many MSMEs supplying components for domestic and global operations. Driven largely by iPhone shipments which contributed about 75 per cent of total smartphone exports, smartphones rose to India's single largest export category in FY25, up from their rank of 167 among export items in 2015.

India became the world's second-largest mobile phone producer, with more than 99 per cent of phones sold domestically now Made in India moves up the manufacturing value chain. The smartphone PLI scheme is scheduled to conclude in March 2026, though the government is reportedly exploring ways to extend support. Under revised rules, companies were allowed to claim incentives for any five consecutive years within a six-year period.

Apple also sold about 6.5 million iPhone 16 units in the first 11 months of 2025, making it the country's highest selling smartphone.

INDIA TRADE TALKS

India European Union Trade Talks Enter Final Stage

NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday said that negotiations for a trade agreement between India and the European Union have entered their final stage, even as discussions continue with the United States for a separate bilateral trade deal. His remarks highlight India's parallel push to deepen economic engagement with both Western partners amid shifting global trade dynamics.

Goyal made the statement while delivering the keynote address at the Regional MSME Conclave in Rajkot, where he underlined the government's focus on expanding market access for Indian exporters and strengthening the role of micro, small and medium enterprises in global value chains. He said India is committed to securing balanced and mutually beneficial trade agreements that protect domestic interests while opening new opportunities abroad.

The minister has just returned from Brussels, where he held high-level discussions with Maros Sefcovic, the European Union's Trade and

Economic Security Commissioner. The meeting was part of intensified efforts to finalise a long-pending India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which both sides see as strategically important amid global supply chain realignments.

India is pushing strongly for zero-duty access for its labour-intensive sectors, including textiles, leather, apparel, gems and jewellery, and handicrafts. These sectors are major employers and are seen as critical for boosting exports and supporting MSMEs. In a post on X, Goyal said that discussions covered key areas of the proposed agreement and reaffirmed a shared commitment to a rules-based trading framework and a modern economic partnership. He added that the proposed FTA aims to safeguard the interests of farmers and MSMEs while integrating Indian industries more deeply into global supply chains.

Goyal's comments on ongoing India–US trade talks came on the same day that the new US Ambassador to New Delhi, Sergio Gor, said the next round of bilateral discussions would be held on Tuesday, January 13. Speaking after assuming charge, Gor said both sides remain engaged despite differences on tariffs and market access.

Sri Lanka's Tourism Comeback

Travellers can return with confidence

Sri Lanka's message to the world – and especially to India – is clear: the island is open, safe, and ready to welcome visitors again. In the weeks since Cyclone Ditwah, the strongest storm to hit the country in nearly two decades, the nation has moved with striking speed to restore roads, hospitals, tourist sites and essential services. For Indian travellers contemplating that long pending island getaway, the reassurance is no longer just a diplomatic sound bite. It is backed by on ground repairs, record tourist arrivals and a tourism sector that has proved both resilient and remarkably well organised.

At a time when images of floods and landslides linger online long after waters recede, Sri Lanka faces a dual challenge: rebuilding infrastructure and rebuilding trust. The first has advanced far faster than many expected. The second requires clear communication – and that is where the country's tourism leadership.

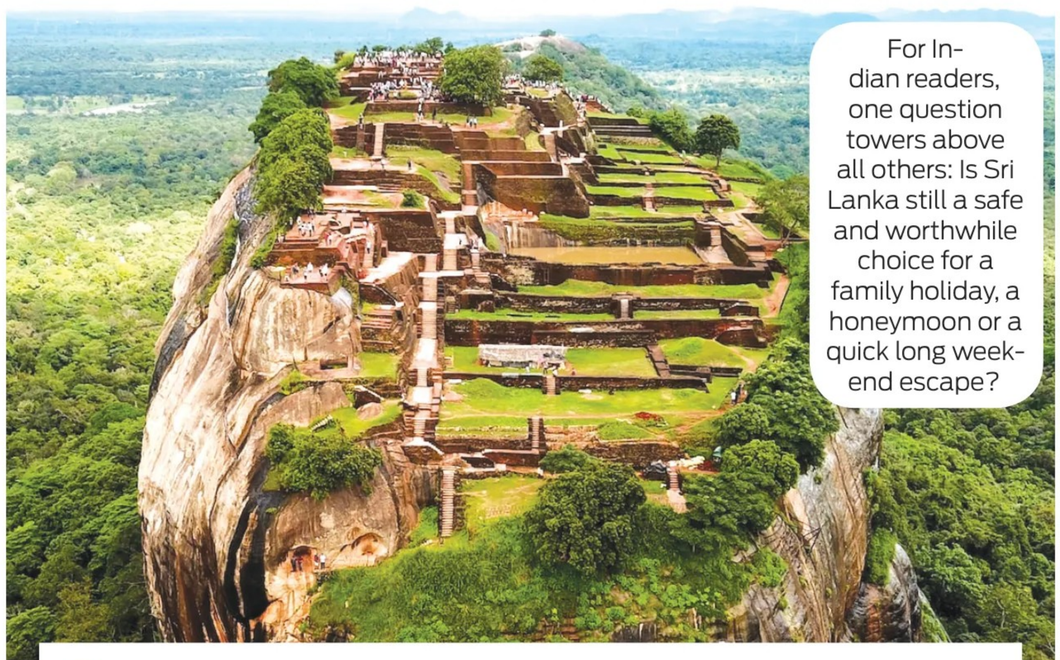
including Deputy Minister of Tourism Prof. Ruwan Ranasinghe, has stepped forward to tell a different story: not of devastation and despair, but of recovery, readiness and renewed hospitality.

From cyclone shock to swift recovery

Cyclone Ditwah, which struck Sri Lanka at the end of November, was no ordinary storm. It unleashed days of heavy rain, flash floods and landslides, particularly across the central and upland districts. Hill country communities, river valleys and parts of the northeast bore the brunt. Hundreds of lives were lost, homes were destroyed and infrastructure from bridges to power lines suffered extensive damage.

For a country still recovering from its 2022 economic crisis, such a severe weather event could have been a crippling blow. Yet the response following the cyclone reads like a case study in focused emergency management and targeted tourism protection. National agencies, local authorities and international partners moved quickly to clear key routes, restore utilities and keep the backbone of the tourism economy functioning. One of the most striking symbols of this rapid recovery is Mahiyanganaya Hospital, a critical facility that was submerged in floodwaters. Within roughly 60 hours, the hospital was cleaned, rehabilitated and brought back into operation – a turnaround repeatedly highlighted by Sri Lankan officials to illustrate the pace at which essential services were restored. At the same time, India's emergency assistance under Operation Sagar Bandhu saw a fully operational field hospital set up near Mahiyanganaya to support affected communities, underlining both the scale of the disaster and the urgency of the response. These are not cosmetic repairs meant for the cameras. They are the foundations that allow travellers to move safely, receive medical care if needed and rely on functioning infrastructure throughout their journey.

INDIA AT THE HEART OF SRI LANKA'S TOURISM STORY



For Indian readers, one question towers above all others: Is Sri Lanka still a safe and worthwhile choice for a family holiday, a honeymoon or a quick long weekend escape?

Sri Lanka's tourism leadership has responded by placing India front and centre in its outreach. In public statements, Deputy Minister Prof. Ruwan Ranasinghe has repeatedly highlighted the deep cultural, historical and people to people ties between the two countries, describing India as the island's closest neighbour and most trusted partner in difficult times. India's role operates on two levels. First, India is Sri Lanka's single largest source market for tourists, sending more visitors than any other country year after year. Indian travellers are present in every segment – from budget backpackers and small group religious pilgrims to luxury resort holidaymakers and corporate incentive tours. Their familiarity with Sri Lanka means that safety concerns, if not addressed clearly, can ripple quickly through social and family networks.

Second, India has been among the first responders in each of Sri Lanka's recent crises, from the 2022 economic meltdown to Cyclone Ditwah. Under Operation Sagar Bandhu, India delivered tonnes of relief material, medical supplies and bridge units to restore connectivity in hard hit areas, alongside financial assistance for reconstruction. Indian airlines, travel agents and tour operators have also played a role by maintaining routes.

ROADS, AIRPORTS AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES: TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE RESTORED

- All major Class A and Class B roads are now open for safe traffic, including the crucial Colombo–Nuwara Eliya and Badulla–Mahiyanganaya routes that link many popular tourists
- Only a limited number of smaller internal roads remain partially affected, mostly in non tourist interior pockets, with alternative routes available.
- Airports and primary railway lines continue to operate, with flights and inter city train services running during the peak tourist season, including December and January.travelandtourworld+2
- Power, water and telecommunications have been largely restored in major tourism zones, and temporary outages during the cyclone have been resolved as grid repairs progressed.

Importantly for those already in the country, Sri Lanka Tourism activated and publicised a 24 hour emergency hotline (1912). This helpline has handled dozens of calls from travellers, helping with rerouting, information and coordination with foreign missions when necessary. Authorities emphasise that every case recorded through this system during the cyclone period was resolved, and no foreign tourist was reported injured or stranded as a result of the disaster.

Summary report on tourist arrivals up to 11th Dec 2025

	2018	2024	2025		
Month	Number of Tourists	Number of Tourists	Month	Number of Tourists	percentage Change (25/24) %
January	238,924	208,253	January	252,761	21.4
February	235,618	218,350	February	240,217	10.0
March	233,382	209,181	March	229,298	9.6
April	180,429	148,867	April	174,608	17.3
May	129,466	112,128	May	132,919	18.5
June	146,828	113,470	June	138,241	21.8
July	217,829	187,810	July	200,244	6.6
August	200,359	164,609	August	198,235	20.4
Septem	149,087	122,140	September	158,971	30.2
October	153,123	135,907	October	165,193	21.5
Novemb	195,582	184,158	November	212,906	15.6
Decemb	253,169	248,592	December (01st ~ 11th)	70,023	
Total	2,333,796	2,053,46		2,173,616	

TOURISM NUMBERS TELL THEIR OWN STORY

Beyond ministerial assurances, hard data offers one of the clearest indicators of how the world perceives Sri Lanka's safety and readiness. Despite the cyclone, tourist arrivals remained strong at the end of 2025. Official figures show that arrivals in December – the month immediately following the storm – actually rose by more than four percent compared to the same period a year earlier.

The broader numbers are even more striking:

•Sri Lanka welcomed over 2.36 million foreign tourists in 2025, the highest annual figure in its history and a clear sign that the sector has rebounded from both the pandemic and the 2022 economic crisis.

• Tourism earnings reached around 3.2 billion US dollars in 2025, consolidating the industry's position as one of the top sources of foreign exchange for the country.

• Authorities have set an ambitious target of 3 million foreign visitors for 2026, indicating confidence that travel demand will not only survive the cyclone shock but continue to grow.

These numbers reflect more than just successful marketing. They suggest that travellers already on the ground during and after the cyclone have not reported systemic safety failures or chaos.

Safety, Assurance And The 1912 Helpline

In the age of social media, reputations can be damaged faster than roads can be repaired. Isolated videos of flooded streets or damaged hotels often circulate without context, creating an outsized sense of danger even after conditions have improved. Sri Lanka has tried to counter this with transparent, practical safety measures rather than pure image building.

Key developments include:

- Wildlife parks such as Yala, Udawalawe, Bundala, Kumana and Horton Plains have been assessed and reopened, with access trails and facilities declared safe for visitors.
- Heritage and cultural landmarks in the famed Cultural Triangle – including sites at Sigiriya, Dambulla, Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura – are fully accessible again, after checks for structural safety and landslide risk.
- Popular upland towns like Ella and Nuwara Eliya, which experienced road disruptions and landslide warnings during the peak of the storm, have progressively resumed normal operations, with hoteliers reporting that bookings are stabilising as confidence returns.
- Along the southern and western coasts, where most Indian tourists traditionally flock for beaches and resorts, the impact of the cyclone was relatively limited and short lived. Hotels there continued to host guests even while other parts of the island were still cleaning up.

The symbolic arrival of a cruise ship carrying more than 2,000 passengers just days after the cyclone underscored this sense of continuity. Ports were operational, shore excursions went ahead and visitors disembarked without incident – a visible sign that Sri Lanka's tourism machinery had not ground to a halt.

Islanders challenge Jets after thrilling shootout win

WINNIPEG

New York Islanders travel to Winnipeg on Tuesday night carrying confidence after a tense shootout victory over Minnesota. The Islanders have been one of the steadier teams this season, finding ways to win close games and protect leads when it matters most.

Winnipeg Jets return home hoping to change recent struggles. While their home record has been mixed, the Jets have often kept games close but failed to finish strong in one goal contests. Tuesday offers another chance to reset in front of home fans.

This meeting is the second between the teams this season. Winnipeg won the first clash by a clear margin, a result New York remembers as extra motivation. The Islanders have been strong when their offense gets going, especially when scoring three or more goals.

Bo Horvat continues to lead New York with consistent scoring, while Mathew Barzal adds speed and creativity up front. For Winnipeg, Kyle Connor remains the main threat, supported by Gabriel Vilardi's recent playmaking.

Recent form favors the Islanders, who have allowed fewer goals over the last ten games. With no injuries reported, both teams should ice full lineups, setting the stage for a fast, competitive game Tuesday night in Winnipeg. Fans expect energy, noise, and playoff-like intensity throughout the building tonight.

Diallo, Steinbach power Washington past Ohio State

Diallo scored 22, perfect at the line; Steinbach added 21 and nine, igniting a decisive second-half 14–0 run

SEATTLE

Zoom Diallo and Hannes Steinbach delivered strong performances as Washington defeated Ohio State 81–74 in a competitive Big Ten Conference clash.

Diallo led the Huskies with 22 points, shooting efficiently from the field and staying perfect from the free throw line. Steinbach closely followed with 21 points and nine rebounds, playing a key role in turning the game in Washington's favor during the second half. His three point play sparked a crucial 14–0 run that gave the Huskies a lead they never gave up.

Washington, now 10–6 overall and 2–3 in conference play, also received solid support from Bryson Tucker, who scored 12 points, and Franck Kepnang, who added 11 points and seven rebounds. The Huskies showed patience on offense and improved defensive intensity after halftime.

Ohio State began the game strongly, racing to an early lead behind Bruce Thornton. The senior guard finished with 28 points, once again leading the Buckeyes' scoring effort. Amare Bynum added 20 points, while Devin Royal contributed 11 points and eight rebounds.

The Buckeyes held the advantage for much of the first half and went into the break with a narrow lead. Early in the second half, Ohio State extended its margin, but Washington responded quickly. Steinbach's energy, combined with key baskets from Diallo and a three pointer from Quimari Peterson, shifted momentum.

Despite late efforts from Thornton, Ohio State could not close the gap. Washington remained composed from the free throw line and managed the clock well in the final minutes.

The Huskies will next host second ranked Michigan, while Ohio State returns home to face UCLA, as both teams prepare for another demanding week of conference action.

Harbaugh hopeful, Herbert unsure after Chargers loss

FOXBOROUGH

Los Angeles Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh tried to stay positive after his team suffered a 16–3 loss to the New England Patriots in the NFL wild card round, but quarterback Justin Herbert admitted he is unsure about the future.

After the defeat, Harbaugh told his players, "Those that stay will be champions," insisting the loss should be seen as a new beginning rather than an ending. However, his tone appeared subdued during the post match press conference as the Chargers failed to win a playoff game once again.

Herbert, facing his third playoff loss in three attempts, struggled to hide his disappointment. When asked if he still believed he could lead the team to postseason success, the quarterback said he did not have an answer yet. The Chargers have not won a playoff game since 2018, adding to the frustration around the team.

Raphinha double helps Barca defeat Madrid

JEDDAH

Raphinha emerged as the match winner as FC Barcelona defeated Real Madrid 3–2 to retain the Spanish Super Cup title in a thrilling final. The Brazilian winger scored the opening goal and later netted the decisive winner to cap a dramatic night of football.

Real Madrid began cautiously, leaving Kylian Mbappe on the bench and setting up to defend deep while looking to counter attack. Barcelona controlled possession early, though clear chances were limited in the opening stages. Vinicius Junior and Gonzalo Garcia both tested Barcelona goalkeeper Joan Garcia, but their efforts lacked power.

Barcelona slowly pushed Madrid back and created better chances. Thibaut Courtois denied Fermin Lopez twice, while Raphinha missed narrowly before finally breaking the deadlock with a low finish after 36 minutes. Barca looked in control, but their missed chances proved costly.

Just before halftime, Vinicius produced a brilliant solo run from midfield to equalise for Madrid. The celebrations were short lived as Robert Lewandowski restored Barcelona's lead moments later with a smart finish after a fine pass from Pedri. Madrid responded again when Garcia scored from close range after a corner, making it 2–2 at the break.

The second half remained intense, with chances at both ends. Raphinha sealed the match in the 73rd minute when his shot deflected off a defender and wrong footed Courtois.

Late drama followed as Barcelona were reduced to ten men after Frenkie de Jong was sent off. Madrid pushed hard for an equaliser, but Barcelona defended bravely. Joan Garcia made key saves in stoppage time, allowing Barcelona to celebrate a hard fought and deserved trophy win.

Hertl stars as Golden Knights rout Sharks

SAN JOSE

Tomas Hertl delivered a brilliant all round performance as the Vegas Golden Knights defeated the San Jose Sharks 7–2 to register their fourth straight victory in the NHL.

Hertl scored two goals and added three assists in a dominant display against his former team. Jack Eichel also found the net twice as Vegas controlled the game from start to finish. The win also brought an end to young Sharks forward Macklin Celebrini's impressive 13 game points streak.

Vegas came into the match after a win over St. Louis the previous night and showed no signs of fatigue. Eichel opened the scoring in the first period before Pavel Dorofeyev doubled the lead with a power play goal. Dorofeyev finished the night with a goal and an assist.

The Golden Knights pulled away in the second period, scoring three more goals. Hertl netted a power play goal, while strong pressure from Vegas kept the Sharks on the back foot. Zach Whitecloud and Shea Theodore also got on the scoresheet, highlighting the depth in the Vegas lineup.

Carl Lindbom made 18 saves in goal for the Golden Knights, while Mark Stone contributed two assists even though his goal scoring streak came to an end. For San Jose, Collin Graf and Alexander Wennberg scored the only goals.

Bayern crush Wolfsburg to extend Bundesliga lead

NEW DELHI

Bayern Munich sent a strong message in the Bundesliga by thrashing Wolfsburg 8–1 to move eleven points clear at the top of the table. The dominant win came as Bayern played their first league match after the winter break and showed no signs of slowing down.

Michael Olise starred for the defending champions, scoring two goals in an impressive display. Harry Kane and Luis Díaz also found the net as Bayern tore apart the Wolfsburg defence, especially in a ruthless second half that produced six goals. Substitute players Raphael Guerreiro and Leon Goretzka added to the tally, while Wolfsburg contributed two own goals on a difficult night.

The match began with Bayern taking early control, but Wolfsburg briefly fought back when Dzenan Pejcinovic equalised in the 13th minute after a defensive error. That moment proved to be only a short interruption, as Bayern quickly regained focus and tightened their grip on the game.

Coach Vincent Kompany praised his team's hunger and intensity, saying he was pleased to see the players continue pressing and attacking even with a big lead. Playing in freezing conditions, Bayern maintained high energy and showed why they remain favourites to defend the title.

There was a brief concern when Kane received treatment after a knock to his ankle in the first half, but the striker soon returned and continued to trouble the opposition.

With this result, Bayern strengthened their position at the top just 16 matches into the season. The commanding victory underlined their depth, confidence, and clear ambition to stay ahead in the title race as the Bundesliga season continues.

Blue Jackets face Flames after overtime boost

COLUMBUS

Columbus Blue Jackets return to home ice Tuesday night as they welcome the Calgary Flames for an important interconference clash. The game comes after an exciting overtime victory that lifted spirits inside the locker room and among local fans.

Columbus enters the matchup with a balanced record and strong confidence at home. The team has shown it can control games when its offense clicks, especially when scoring three or more goals. Defense has also tightened in recent outings, helping the Jackets close games late.

Calgary arrives in Ohio hoping to improve its poor road form. The Flames have struggled away from home this season, giving up more goals than they score. Discipline has also been an issue, with frequent penalties putting pressure on their defense.

Tuesday's contest is the second meeting between the two teams this season.

Patriots, 49ers lead teams into divisional round

NEW DELHI

The New England Patriots, San Francisco 49ers, Buffalo Bills, Chicago Bears and Los Angeles Rams booked their places in the NFL divisional round after strong wins in the wild card stage of the playoffs.

San Francisco produced a late comeback to beat defending champions Philadelphia Eagles 23–19. Quarterback Brock Purdy threw a four yard touchdown pass to Christian McCaffrey with under three minutes left. McCaffrey also scored earlier with a long catch, helping the 49ers earn a tough road victory.

The Patriots delivered a dominant defensive display against the Los Angeles Chargers, winning 16–3. New England sacked quarterback Justin Herbert six times and limited the Chargers to just 207 total yards, showing control throughout the game. Buffalo edged past the Jacksonville Jaguars 27–24 in a tense contest. Josh Allen scored on a one yard run late in the fourth quarter, while a key interception sealed the Bills' first road playoff win since 1992.

The Chicago Bears staged a dramatic comeback against the Green Bay Packers. Trailing by 18 points at halftime, rookie quarterback Caleb Williams threw two late touchdown passes, including a decisive strike to D.J. Moore. The Bears held on for their first playoff win since 2010.

The Rams also advanced after a close 34–31 victory over the Carolina Panthers. Matthew Stafford threw a late touchdown pass to Colby Parkinson to complete the comeback. Stafford finished with over 300 passing yards in a strong performance.

In the divisional round, the 49ers will face the top seeded Seattle Seahawks, while the Bills travel to play the Denver Broncos. The Bears host the Rams, and the Patriots await the winner of the Texans versus Steelers game.

The playoffs now move into a decisive phase, with momentum building and title hopes growing for the remaining teams.

Fulks hits late jumper as UCF wins

ORLANDO

No. 25 UCF edged past Cincinnati 73-72 on Sunday night after Themus Fulks sank a calm jumper with eleven seconds left, sealing a dramatic Big 12 Conference victory at home.

Riley Kugel led the Knights with nineteen points, while Fulks, one of the nation's top playmakers, finished with twelve assists and six points overall. Jamichael Stillwell added fifteen points, and reserve forward Jeremy Foumena chipped in with twelve points and eight rebounds.

Cincinnati stayed close until the final horn. Jalen Celestine had a chance to win, but his three point attempt at the buzzer hit the back iron and bounced away. Former UCF player Moustapha Thiam, who transferred to Cincinnati, drew loud boos and scored a career high twenty four points. Jizzle James scored fourteen, while Baba Miller added thirteen in the loss.

The game remained tight throughout, with UCF holding a slim halftime lead. The Knights went ahead by five late, before Cincinnati briefly moved in front in the final minute. UCF shot well from the floor and stayed composed under pressure. Cincinnati struggled from long range but stayed alive through defense and rebounding.Fulks' late basket proved decisive, lifting the Knights to a narrow win and keeping their strong season momentum alive as conference play continues this week.

Women's T20 World Cup tickets break records

Memories of 2017 linger, when a sold-out Lord's final saw England win, transforming fans' view of women's cricket

NEW DELHI

Ticket sales for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in England have crossed an important milestone, showing the fast rise of women's cricket worldwide. Reports say more than 100,000 tickets have already been sold, beating the total sales of the 2017 Women's ODI World Cup.

The tournament will be played in June and July, with the opening match on June 12. England will host the event, which will feature 12 teams for the first time, making it the biggest Women's T20 World Cup so far.

Memories remain strong from 2017, when the final at Lord's was sold out as England lifted the trophy. That match changed how fans viewed the women's game, proving it could draw huge crowds.

Teams are divided into two groups. Australia, India, Pakistan, South Africa, and others will battle for semi-final spots. The top two teams from each group will move forward.

Matches will be held across seven famous venues, ending with the final at Lord's on July 5. New Zealand enter as defending champions, adding excitement to a historic tournament. Fans from across the world are expected to travel, filling stadiums and proving women's cricket has earned lasting respect everywhere today globally.

Milos Raonic announces retirement from professional tennis

NEW DELHI

Canadian tennis star Milos Raonic has officially announced his retirement, closing nearly two decades in professional tennis. The 35-year-old former world No. 3 revealed the news on Monday, reflecting on a career marked by both triumphs and challenges.

"Time has come, I am retiring from tennis. This is as ready as I will ever be," Raonic wrote on X, sharing heartfelt thoughts about his journey. He described tennis as both his passion and obsession, a sport that began for him at age eight and grew into a lifelong profession.

Raonic captured eight ATP tour-level titles during his career. His standout year was 2016, when he reached the Wimbledon final after a dramatic semi-final victory over Roger Federer. That season, he also advanced to the Australian Open semi-finals, the ATP Finals semi-finals, and the Indian Wells final, finishing the year ranked a career-high No. 3.

Raonic won eight ATP titles, with 2016 as his standout year, reaching Wimbledon final, Australian Open semi-finals, ATP Finals semi-finals, Indian Wells final, and finishing world No. 3.

Injuries limited his play in recent years, with his final professional appearance coming at the 2024 Paris Olympics, where he lost in a tightly contested first-round match.

In his farewell message, Raonic expressed gratitude to fans, coaches, and team members who supported him throughout his career. "I have been the luckiest person to live out and fulfil my dreams," he said, emphasizing the privilege of competing at the highest level and sharing the court with tennis legends.

Raonic leaves behind a legacy of skill, resilience, and inspiration for the next generation of players.

Washington Sundar out, Badoni earns ODI call

MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India confirmed that all-rounder Washington Sundar has been ruled out of the remaining One-Day International matches against New Zealand after suffering a side strain. The injury occurred while he was bowling during the first ODI in Vadodara on Sunday. Medical scans will be conducted, and experts will decide the recovery plan.

To fill the gap, selectors named Ayush Badoni as Sundar's replacement, giving the 26-year-old his first call-up to the Indian national team. Badoni has played 27 List A matches, scoring 693 runs and taking 18 wickets, showing promise as a reliable all-rounder. He will join the squad in Rajkot, where the second ODI begins on Wednesday.

This is another injury setback for India in the series. Earlier, wicket-keeper batter Rishabh Pant was ruled out after a similar side strain, with Dhruv Jurel stepping in as his replacement. Tilak Varma, recovering from groin surgery, has also been ruled out of the early T20I matches.

The injuries raise concerns ahead of major tournaments, including the home T20 World Cup. Sundar remains part of the World Cup plans, but his fitness will be closely watched in the coming weeks. The updated squad now features experienced names and young talent, as India aims to stay competitive despite fitness worries.

Team officials said player health remains the top priority and replacements were chosen carefully. Fans will hope the side settles quickly and delivers strong performances in the remaining matches against New Zealand as preparations continue for a busy international season ahead, testing depth, balance, and resilience of the Indian squad overall this year.

Team wants Harshit Rana as lower-order all-rounder

VADODARA

After India's four-wicket win over New Zealand in the opening One-Day International, fast bowler Harshit Rana revealed that the team management wants him to develop as an all-rounder and bat at number eight. He said the focus is on improving his batting so he can support the team in pressure situations.

Chasing a target of 301, India lost Rohit Sharma early. Captain Shubman Gill scored a calm 56, while Virat Kohli played a fluent knock of 93. The pair added 118 runs for the second wicket. Shreyas Iyer contributed 49, while KL Rahul stayed unbeaten on 29 to guide the team home.

Rana played a crucial role with the bat, scoring 29 runs from 23 balls. He came in ahead of Washington Sundar and showed confidence during the chase. Rana said KL Rahul helped him settle and boosted his belief at the crease.

He added that he spends extra time in the nets working on his batting and feels capable of scoring 30 to 40 runs when needed. Rana said this belief is shared by the team management.

Earlier, New Zealand made a strong start through Devon Conway and Henry Nicholls, who added 117 runs. Daryl Mitchell top-scored with 84. Mohammed Siraj led India's bowling with two wickets, while Rana and Prasidh Krishna also took two each.

Rana dismissed concerns about early wickets, saying different phases exist in ODI cricket. He felt the pitch was slow with little bounce and praised the bowlers for keeping control.

The young pacer said learning continues and he remains eager to contribute in roles.

ECB considers player curfew after Ashes issues

NEW DELHI

The England and Wales Cricket Board is considering bringing back a player curfew after concerns over off field behaviour during the recently concluded Ashes series in Australia. England lost the series 4–1, and the disappointment went beyond results, with reports of discipline problems drawing attention.

According to reports, several England players were involved in heavy drinking sessions during the tour. After the second Test, when England were already trailing 2–0, the squad reportedly spent six days in Noosa with regular late nights. Videos later surfaced on social media, including one showing opener Ben Duckett appearing disoriented outside a resort. There were also reports of players drinking heavily in Perth following the two day series opener, with members of the squad seen at a casino. These incidents added to earlier concerns after details emerged about a nightclub episode involving Harry Brook in New Zealand.

Nandini Sharma praises Delhi Capitals fight till end

MUMBAI

After the Delhi Capitals suffered a narrow four run defeat against Gujarat Giants in the Women's Premier League, young pacer Nandini Sharma praised the team's fighting spirit and said they stayed in the contest till the very end.

Chasing a stiff target of 210, Delhi Capitals finished on 205 for five in twenty overs and remained in the match until the final ball. Lizelle Lee led the chase with a powerful 86 from 54 balls, while Laura Wolvaardt added a quick 77 off 38 deliveries. Despite falling short, the batting display showed strong intent and belief.

Earlier, Nandini Sharma delivered a memorable bowling performance, picking up five wickets for 33 runs. Playing only her second WPL match, she became the first uncapped Indian player to take a hat trick and the first Indian to claim a five wicket haul in the league. Four of her wickets came in the final over, turning the match into a close finish.

Speaking after the game, Nandini said the team gave everything and took many positives from the loss. She credited captain Jemimah Rodrigues for calm guidance on the field and said the support helped her stay focused.

Nandini also thanked senior player Marizanne Kapp for sharing valuable advice about reading pitches and match situations. She spoke about her journey, starting cricket at a young age, learning from different coaches, and improving pace and variations by playing with boys.

The young pacer said the WPL offers a big platform for fast bowlers to learn, grow, express themselves. Delhi Capitals will next face UP Warriorz, hoping to convert strong performances into a win soon.

Kohli consistency impresses Iyer after match-winning knock

VADODARA

India vice captain Shreyas Iyer praised Virat Kohli for his unmatched consistency after the senior batter played a key role in India's four wicket win over New Zealand in the first One Day International. Kohli's calm and controlled innings once again showed why he remains central to India's batting strength.

Chasing a challenging target of 301, India lost an early wicket, but Kohli steadied the innings with a composed knock of 93. He rotated the strike well, picked the right moments to attack, and ensured pressure never built on the middle order. His innings guided India to a 1–0 lead in the three match series. Speaking in a video shared by the BCCI, Iyer said Kohli continues to lead by example. He added that watching Kohli bat feels familiar because he delivers the same impact time and again. According to Iyer, Kohli's ability to stay focused and adapt to situations sets him apart from others.

During the innings, Kohli crossed the milestone of 28,000 international runs, becoming the fastest player to reach the mark. He achieved it in fewer innings than Sachin Tendulkar and also moved to second place on the all time list of international run scorers, behind only Tendulkar.

Gauff rises third as Bencic returns top

NEW DELHI

Coco Gauff climbed to world number three in the latest WTA rankings released on Monday, just days before the Australian Open 2026 draw in Melbourne. The updated rankings will decide seedings for the season's first Grand Slam, with Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek set as the top two seeds.

Gauff moved ahead of fellow American Amanda Anisimova after a strong showing at the United Cup, where the United States reached the semifinals. Anisimova slipped to fourth following her early exit at the Brisbane International. The swap reflected recent form, with Gauff showing consistency at the start of the year.

Switzerland's Belinda Bencic made a notable return to the Top 10, rising to number ten for the first time since becoming a mother in April 2024. Bencic impressed at the United Cup, winning all five of her singles matches and helping Switzerland finish as runners up. Her victories included wins over top players such as Swiatek and Jasmine Paolini.

Defending Australian Open champion Madison Keys dropped two places to ninth after a quarterfinal loss in Brisbane. Elena Rybakina, Jessica Pegula, Paolini, and Mirra Andreeva rounded out the top eight, with Paolini and Andreeva each moving up one spot.

The rankings also saw notable jumps outside the top ten. Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk climbed to number twenty after reaching the Brisbane final, while Elina Svitolina moved up to twelfth following her title win in Auckland. China's Xinyu Wang rose sharply into the top fifty.

Several young players achieved career high rankings, highlighting growing depth in women's tennis. Indian players remained outside the top tiers, with gradual movement in both singles and doubles rankings.

The Australian Open draw will take place on Thursday, setting the stage for an exciting start to the 2026 tennis season.

Kyrgios grand slam dream fading, says McNamee

NEW DELHI

Former Australian Open director Paul McNamee believes time is running out for Nick Kyrgios to make a serious run at a Grand Slam title, saying the Australian's absence from the singles draw will not hurt the tournament.

Kyrgios recently confirmed he will skip the singles event at the Australian Open due to ongoing fitness problems. Instead, he will play doubles with long time partner Thanasi Kokkinakis. McNamee said the tournament has grown beyond relying on one player and added that best of five set matches on hard courts demand full fitness.

The outspoken star has struggled with injuries for several years. He played only five matches in 2025 before ending his season early. Though he returned briefly through exhibition matches and a wildcard entry in Brisbane, he was knocked out in the first round. His doubles comeback with Kokkinakis has also been challenging. McNamee said Kyrgios remains one of the most exciting players to watch, praising his natural talent and unique style.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.